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PLAYBOY

An oil painting of a woman in a red dress, seen from the side, with a large, fluffy white and light blue cloud for a head. The background is a textured blue. The title 'Relationship Riddles' is written in large white letters over the left side of the painting.

Relationship Riddles

The truth and other lies

BY IAN KIRKE



I was fortunate to grow up exposed to some of the best cop programs ever. The immortal lines of those TV detectives were pure gold: “Book ‘em, Danno!” (Steve McGarrett, Hawaii Five-0), “Elementary my dear Watson” (The adventures of Sherlock Holmes), and, my all-time favorite, “Just one more thing” delivered so brilliantly by Lieutenant Columbo.

Who hasn’t watched a police series, especially when the suspect is being questioned, and thought, “I can do better than that!”? If you have then you are probably right as TV has created an illusion that police interviewing is somehow an adrenalin charged game of cat and mouse devoid of any legal safeguards. The reality is that real-life police interviews are pretty laborious, often foreseeable and lack the excitement that many amateur sleuths associate with this discipline. How confidently can I say this? Well, I’m an ex-senior cop and have since specialized in the post-graduate research of investigative skills.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to blow away some of the many myths and legends that surround this subject and give you the heads up on how easy it is to develop a pretty robust skillset in a matter of moments enabling you to improve your critique of the pretend cops but perhaps better still apply it to the domestic investigations that you encounter on a regular basis. For example, kids fibbing, things not adding up with a partner or even a workplace issue that you are managing. I will commence with the presumption that you are a pretty effective interviewer already without even knowing it. If you like talking then you are almost there!

Initially though let’s debunk some of the crap that circulates about this not-so-dark art. Getting to the absolute truth of the matter is, at best, whimsical. Firstly, the truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. In the same way that history is written by the victors, a suspect will create their own narrative. Sensory perception will also affect what people recall and the importance they place on something. Two people looking out of the same window will inevitably note differences. As William Christopher, a partner in Kingsley Napley, London, once said to me, “There are ‘6 truths’; Truth perceived by the defendant, truth articulated by the defendant’s counsel, truth perceived by the victim, truth stated by the prosecution, truth maintained by the jury and, of course, the truth itself.” So, if you are seeking the 100% copper-bottomed truth then please think again because it isn’t going to be forthcoming. Getting somewhere close to the truth is, however, achievable. More of that later.

Secondly, all democratic criminal justice systems have a legal safeguard against self-incrimination. In other words, the right to silence. For example, in the UK the police caution reminds all suspects of this legal right. Sure, it may harm the defense of an accused if they do not mention when questioned something which they later rely on in court but that doesn’t undermine the fundamental right to say absolutely nothing. The historical context of this protection dates back to the times when the common person was considered too thick to understand the gravity of an alleged crime and needed to be represented by someone a lot smarter. From personal experience, I can testify that many real-life police officers struggled with this concept since very often the follow-up narrative to a successfully delivered caution were various incentives to deviate from this rule of law including, for example, “This is your opportunity to tell us what happened” or even coercive statements that are wholly illegal. I never tired of the look of astonishment on some officers faces that after four repetitions

of the caution (on arrest, notice when in custody, advice by the duty solicitor and prior to the first question) some suspects actually decided to say fuck all! So, if someone decides to opt for this route how the hell can you get any account (truthful or otherwise) unless that is you beat it out of them? Just for the record this is unlawful too.

Thirdly, despite many of us claiming that we can sniff out a liar just by looking at them we are actually pretty crap at this! Eyes up, down, to the right or left, scratching the nose, shuffling in their seat. Yes, even I believed that bollocks at the commencement of my law enforcement days. As a newly promoted Sergeant, I recall opening the heavy cell door at High Wycombe to remove a prisoner for questioning. Of Indian heritage, the young man immediately rose to his feet and looked directly down at the floor, ‘Ah-ha a liar! How clever was I?’ It was only when a wise sage informed me that this was a cultural response to authority that I felt like a pillock.

50-years of lie-detecting research have concluded that our ability to detect deception by observing behavior and listening to speech has a 54% success rate (Vrij et al, 2011, p. 28). Marginally more than tossing a coin. The jury is still out on the use of polygraph tests too. Although many people believe that the use of this equipment in the U.S is mainstream only 23 of the 52 states





employ it and 5 of those mandate that both prosecution and defense must agree beforehand. If you are, like me, susceptible to a nervous twitch if anyone or anything comes within a whisker of your asshole (polygraph sensors are attached to various parts of the body including the abdomen) then naturally elevated stress levels will provide a false positive

To round this nonsense off I must give some credit to a guy who shall remain nameless (although if you ever meet me and ply me with copious amounts of alcohol I may crack and tell you) who made the most ludicrous claim ever. His golden rule was never to ask a question that you don't know the answer to. Can you imagine applying that to, for example, a murder investigation? "Where have you disposed of the body?" Doh! What a complete brain donor. Believe me, there are a lot of them about masquerading as professionals. So now let's look at planning your interview, predictable dialogue, and how we can easily improve our questioning skills and ultimately reach a more reliable decision.

In all approaches separate as best you can your interview plan into as many separate themes as possible and jot them down on a piece of paper. When undertaking a domestic investigation try and commit them to memory as appearing to be unprofessional, sloppy, and unprepared has many advantages. Ideally, you want the suspect to think that you aren't primed and that they have the ascendancy. Your role model should be Lieutenant Columbo. Let us use this case study where you suspect that your partner wasn't actually at a business meeting that particular evening. Your themes would be pre-meeting, meeting agenda, location, participants, outcomes & conclusion. This simple methodology can be duplicated for all future investigations too.

People communicate in very predetermined ways. In fact, 4

modes they can be honest, lie, say absolutely nothing, or choose a mixture of all three. As an interviewer let's be predictable too. In my professional opinion, the primary objective is simply to ask questions. Rudyard Kipling nailed it when he said, "I keep six honest serving-men (they taught me all I knew), their names are What and Why, When and How, and Where and Who." In short open questions.

I frequently ask delegates on the workshops that I facilitate to rank those choices in order of perceived difficulty, excluding the mixture since if you can deal with the other three, by definition, that outcome is a fair accomplishment. Silence always comes top followed by lies, then the truth. I counter this since an uncooperative suspect is the easiest, a liar is the most fun and truth is the toughest. Absolute silence is, in my experience, as rare as rocking horse shit. Typically, the interviewee will be compelled to grunt something usually 'no comment', 'I can't remember' or similar non-committal responses. I acknowledge that this will piss any interviewer off, but this is the time to keep your cool and launch the full range of Exocet Mr Kipling missiles, those beautiful, simplistic yet highly effective open questions.

I recall being asked to review an interview of a particularly nasty suspected robber who had preyed on old ladies collecting their pensions and was later acquitted at court. In the first taped interview, conducted by an experienced detective, he made no comment as was his constitutional right. Towards the end, I could detect the bubbling anger within the copper's vocabulary and tone. In the second interview, this spilled out into a barrage of statements that disclosed that he knew the suspect was guilty as he was seen by several witnesses at key locations wearing specific clothing. Again, the suspect said nothing in response. Surprisingly, there was a third interview requested by the suspect's solicitor. On this occasion, the suspect found his tongue and graphically explained how the robberies had taken place. At court, his defense team successfully persuaded the jury that all the suspect had done was simply repeat back to the officer what he had blurted out in the second interview.

In our case study, your opening statement would be: "Tell me about your business





meeting" then simply listen. Let us imagine that on this occasion your suspect chooses the silent route and adopts a mafia-style composure. Don't fret, just ask open questions about each theme in turn [pre-meeting]: 'Where were you beforehand?', 'Who was with you?' 'What did you talk about?', etc ensuring that after each question you pause (imagining that the other person is responding). The power of the pause can be deafening. To really confuse them frequently thank them. Thanking someone for being uncooperative and saying nothing or little at all is a legitimate way to burden the other side with the stress. Remember that your primary objective is simply to ask questions. By maintaining this patient and repetitive formula I have witnessed even the most daunting suspects of a hitherto fixed mindset to simply crumble part way through and admit their deed. However, at the conclusion, and assuming they have on this occasion been wholly evasive and non-committal, we can make a better-informed decision on whether we believe them or not. But more of that in a moment.

On to my favorite: the liar. Typically, a liar will be reasonably honest in response to the themes that aren't that threatening. In our working example per-

haps the meeting agenda (that, notwithstanding they were never there, would be easy to describe based on previous ones). What a liar will often do is put distance between themselves and the scene of the crime. So being elsewhere they will create a narrative that can be their undoing. Thus, having said they were at a business meeting you can have great fun by putting a nuclear bomb under the themes of location, participants, and outcomes. Your ability to explore these issues with open questions far outweighs their ability to lie. For instance, what room were you in? Where did you sit? Who did you sit next to? Who was sitting directly opposite you? What were the agreed outcomes? What actions did colleague X end up with? etc. At the conclusion thank them and summarise back to them the lies. They will readily nod in agreement, thinking that you have swallowed this hogwash, until you tell them that you will check out what they have said. That's when the house of cards will usually topple over. Even if they have tried to cover their tracks with an accomplice their collusion can never be more effective than your ability to ask open questions.

Finally, the truth. Often hard to deal with as by virtue of initiating an interview your suspicions are already raised. Also, the truth can often yield unexpected consequences that, on reflection, you may have wished to avoid. Having said that, continue with the standard formula and keep asking those wonderfully powerful open questions. If the accuracy of the account can be validated by simple cross-referencing then you can be reassured that it's probably nothing to worry about.

Deciding what is more likely to be factual and what isn't requires a decision-making tool. For those in the criminal justice system that burden of proof is pretty damn high. Beyond all reasonable doubt requires a certainty in the region of 95%. Yet most of you reading this piece won't be a cop. You will be the reasonable person sitting on the sofa trying to reach an outcome that doesn't rely on the slide rule accuracy of a Judge led inquiry and here I can offer you a pragmatic solution. The civil burden of proof engages with the notion of the balance of probabilities. In other words, is it more likely than not that whatever you are reviewing has happened? As I refer to it, the 51% rule. A good example of the distinction between the two was highlighted in the prosecution of the former actor and sportsman O.J. Simpson in America. In *The People of the State of California v. Orenthal James Simpson*, the defendant was charged with the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ron Goldman. The Jury was not convinced that the bar for conviction had been reached and he was acquitted. The 95% rule failed. Latterly relatives of the deceased filed a related suit against Simpson in which the civil court found in favor of the plaintiffs. The 51% rule succeeded.

In conclusion, before you unleash your new found skills of investigation please bear in mind one crucial thing. Wait until you have, at least, a hint of suspicion. A perspiring partner may just be hot. A child who looks nervously towards the ceiling may have just seen a spider. A colleague whose voice unexpectedly falters mid-sentence may have a touch of indigestion. Of course, if your patient application of the standard approach yields a result then there is only one final thing to say: "Book 'em, Danno!"



THE 'ROSE' THAT GREW FROM THE CONCRETE

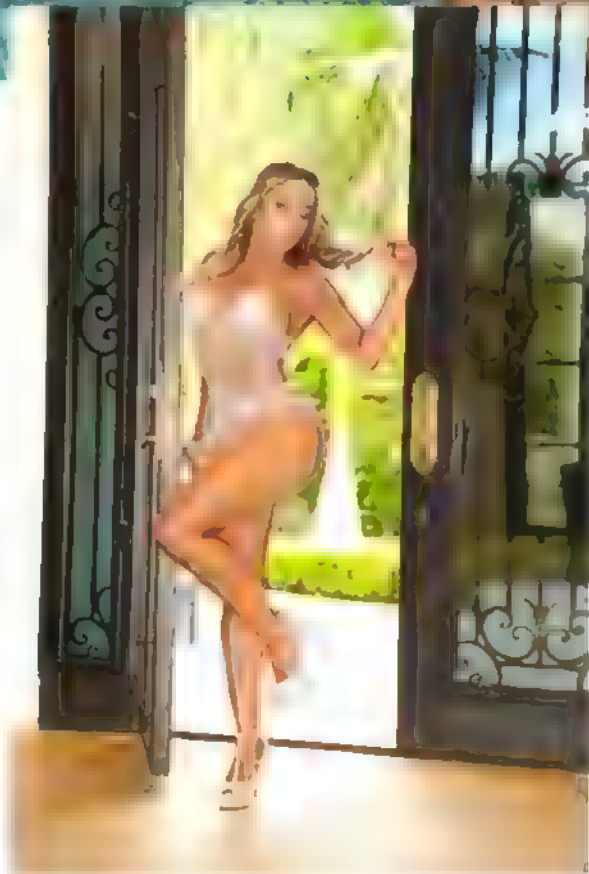
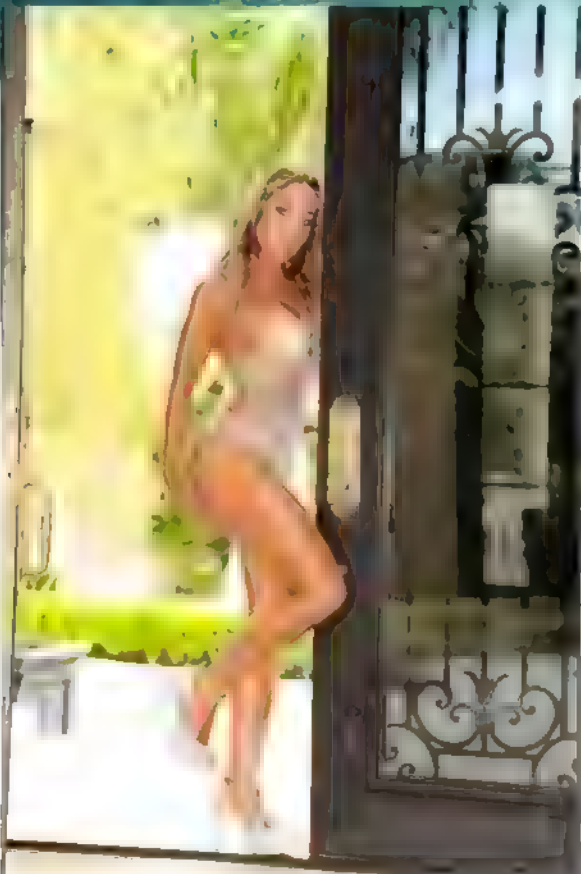
Star Del Castillo













Tell us about your background. Who is "Star Del Castillo"? Star is the Rose that grew from the concrete. Referring to 2Pac's poem, "Damn! A rose grew from the concrete.", just like me. I am the rose that grew from the concrete. Many times in my life I felt like I was being buried, but I was being planted. Like a rose. Because I myself had humble yet challenging beginnings. It's not about where you came from, it's about what you choose to do with what you have and the discipline to walk away from what doesn't serve you. Being overweight most of my adult life did not serve me in Los Angeles, California, albeit, being a proud mother of three incredible children changed my life entirely, and served me beyond my wildest dreams. I wanted to be a better role model for my children and through my journey, I discovered a mother's love and determination to be her best for her children is the greatest motivational factor that forever changed my heart, mind, soul, and physiology. I had a dream to become a rose. But I had to do the impossible, a one. But as long as you have hope

in your heart, you are not alone. In 2017 I let the hope in my heart lead the way with a New Years Resolution to "Love and Live my Best Life!". That's exactly what I did, I re-programmed myself from being almost 300lbs to 130lbs. We are all the creators, directors, and writers of our own story, our own personal legend. We have power to write our stories. So make many wishes, write your own happy ending, but then, make it happen! Who is Star? She makes it happen. She is 'not fragile like a flower. She is fragile like a bomb.' But more like, the rose that grew from the concrete.

What's your favorite color? My favorite color is white. White: classy, timeless, elegant, pure, and clean.

What type of music do you enjoy most? Favorite artist? I am proud to say I love pop music, huge Taylor Swift fan to the core, she is my fave artist!

Favorite movie of all time? Favorite actor? Life is Beautiful for favorite mov-

ie, Roberto Benigni was a brilliant actor in the movie.

Do you prefer the beach or the pool? Beach, please! My mermaid life begins where the waves dance on the seashore.

Read the book or watch the movie? The Alchemist is my favorite book, "And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it," I believe in it too, the laws of attraction is a science, let's manifest destiny.

What is your favorite body part on you? Some eyes touch you more than hands do! That's why my favorite body part are my eyes. And YES, my eyes can touch you more than hands touched you.

What attracts you the most in a partner? High Chemistry and Compatibility attracts me most in a partner.

Biggest turn on? Great energy, great kisser, and great goal getter!



Biggest turn off? Lack of integrity, poor hygiene, and no/low EQ/IQ

Describe your perfect date. Somewhere near the water, warm dry air, and sunset views to die for is the perfect date

Describe yourself using 3 adjectives. BeautyFull & Beautiful The 'Rose' that grew from the concrete

Congrats on your Playboy feature! What does this mean to you? Love and live your best life. Being featured in Playboy means that I get to inspire millions of people with a positive and powerful message that is, don't ever allow your fears outweigh your capacity to make your dreams become a reality. You don't need to be fearless to make your dreams come true, you can make your dreams come true with by deciding you are 1% braver than your fears. And allow that 1% of bravery to become the lighthouse of hope. And your light will shine on. Shine bright, like a diamond!

What do you think of when it comes to Playboy and the iconic bunny? The iconic Playboy bunny is relatable because she is the every day woman (but looks like a stunning Barbie). The every day woman who has hopes, fear of failures, and dreams but also has determination and discipline, enough so to make her dreams come true. The Playboy bunny is special because she is super and her super power is, just being herself: sexy state of mind, smart, and seductive, albeit not fearless entirely, just braver than her fears. Playboy continues to illustrate timeless beautiful bunny's throughout the decades. I am honored, happy, and happy to be an iconic bunny

Where do you see yourself 10 years from now? I see myself very happy ten years from now because no matter where I am, I will always choose the best type of mindset. As long as I choose a positive mindset, positive outcomes and blessings will continue to flow through me and around me. #Blessed

If you could change any one thing in the world, what would it be and why? If I change any one thing in the world, I would change the temperature of snow to cozy warm. I enjoy warmer temperatures. Some like it hot.

Where can our readers find you?

Instagram: CrysStarDeCastillo

TikTok: StarDeCastillo



The Brilliant Power of Patia Borja and Her Meme Empire

The outspoken social media queen on curating your feed with Black Culture magic

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL CUBY

INTRODUCTION RICHIE TALBOY

Most meme accounts don't have origin stories. But when Patia Borja is involved, exceptions to the rule seem to be the norm.

A New York nightlife denizen since 2010, the Florida-born Borja is the bawdy mind behind some of the internet's most audacious memes. Quick-witted and self-assured, the 28-year-old has never been afraid to speak her mind, whether she's exposing abusers or speaking out against anti-Black racism. It's thischutzpah, in fact, that inspired her to create the Fantasy World Guide to Dismantling Systemic Racism, an exhaustive database of resources aimed at educating the masses about America's centuries-long history of racial



oppression. Coincidentally, the database brought global attention to Borja right as PatiasFantasyWorld, her ever-growing Instagram account, known for its vast selection of irreverent and ironic memes rooted in Black culture and identity, was expanding its own audience at an exponential rate.

About that origin story: In 2015, Borja started BundleUpdate, an Instagram account that spotlighted pictures of semi-known NYC scenesters doing cocaine. Being featured on the page became the epitome of downtown cool, and before long New York fixtures were messaging Borja directly with photos of themselves snorting the illicit substance. Despite its hyperlocal popularity, however, BundleUpdate was soon banned. So, with that experience under her belt, Borja reemerged with PatiasFantasyWorld. Initially a private finstax, she eventually opened it to the public, and as the demand for more content increased, she enlisted the help of other internet-obsessed Black millennials—Laina Berry, River Moon and Allan Stoops—to run the page. Today, PatiasFantasyWorld posts to an audience of more than 210,000, making Borja one of social media's most important (and hilarious) voices.

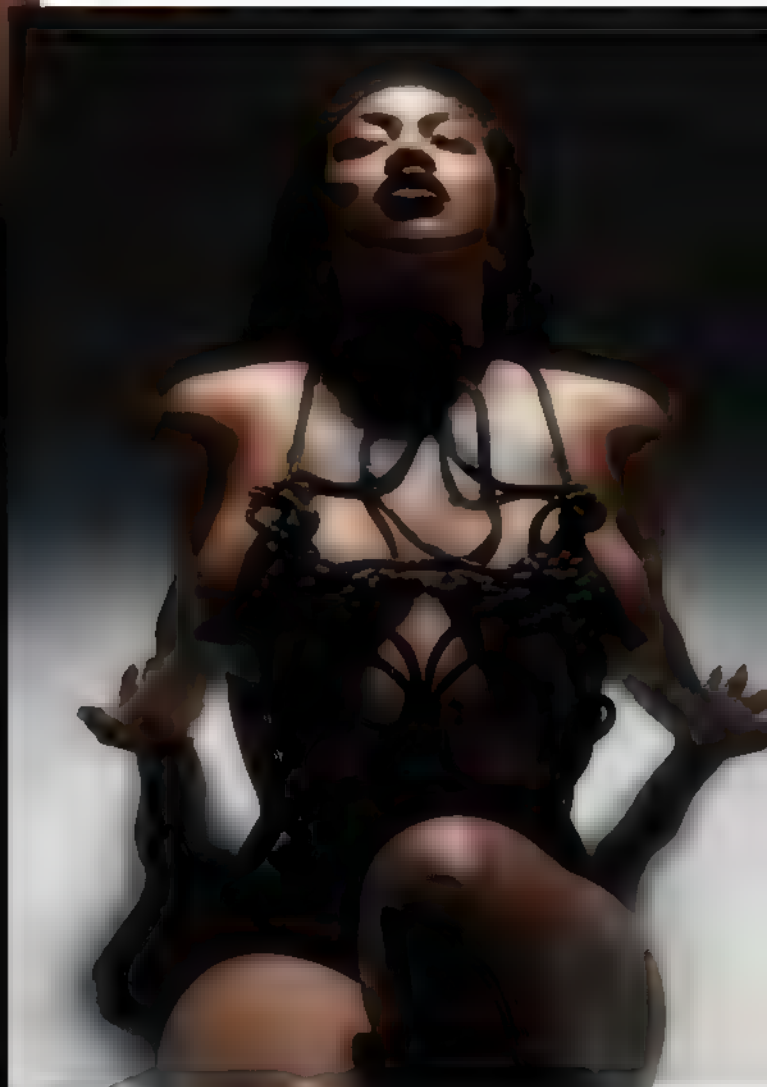
When she's not scouring the Facebook pages of various Black aunties to find her niche memes, the selective curator can usually be found cuddling with her Yorkie puppy, Pocari, or buried in books, studying cybersecurity as part of a certification program with Cisco.

Her meme page may be bigger than she ever imagined—so big that she's now in the business of fighting court cases, most recently when someone accused her of stealing “intellectual property” for her resource database (“A bail fund link is not owned. It's supposed to be shared,” she contends)—but Borja has much grander goals for the long term.

Borja had been enjoying one of the last few warm days of fall when Playboy checked in for a two-hour Zoom call, the conversation with the meme curator-cum-activist covered everything from brand partnerships to mental health to posting foreskin on social media.

The memes you feature are rooted in Black culture and identity. How do you reckon with having a lot of white followers?

I guess I don't think about it. I think white people love talking to each other in the comments more than Black people. For me, it's a front-row seat to seeing white people do that thing they do, which is colonize. We've been saying from the beginning that this is for Black



people. If anything, I hate feeling like I've birthed a lot of white people's senses of humor this year. Some people just learned how to say, "Period."

Despite bearing your name, AtlasFantasyWorld is run by a team. What's the advantage of that?

The big advantage is I have time for myself in my own life. But it also helps because if it was just me, I couldn't post certain things because I'm the "straight Black girl." I mean, some would say I'm gay, but having members of the community really helps us post the more offensive memes—you know, the out-of-pocket memes. It helps in terms of how extreme we can go with the content.

Do people conflate you with the account?

Yeah. I've battled with that for a minute. Before the database, I was like, p"What the fuck? I don't want to be known as just a meme account." I'm grateful for all the shit I get because of the account, and I'm happy that people like the work we've done. But I don't want to be talking about this account when I'm 30. It's a period in time. I don't want it to turn into some shit like FuckJerry, you know?

BundleUpdate, your first real foray into meme culture, was informed by the nightlife scene. Do you think there's a link between your past in the clubs and your career as a meme curator?

Back then, I was the only one who didn't have a job, couldn't keep a job. I was always quitting, not showing up. I was scanning fake CityMD excuses. I knew the same people then I know now. They were all doing shit, and that's what was cool about them going out. But I was partying and couldn't get my life together. I was young. You can't be like, "If I did this back then..." because if I'd done things differently, then I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now.

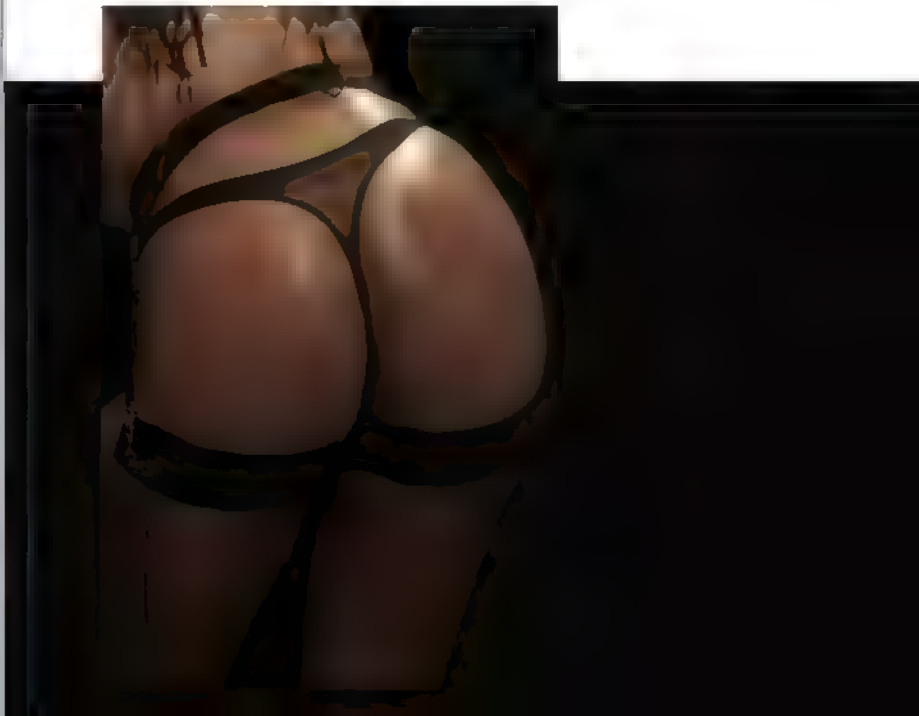


"I have no filter—I'm posting foreskin memes while telling you to read Assata Shakur."

What made you get serious about your future?

Last year I was getting my hair done, and this woman was reading my energy. She was like, p"I can't see you working for anyone." Everyone in New York always says they can't work for people. But, like, I can't work for people. I feel too smart to have people who are managing me, especially because I worked in restaurants and retail. I didn't want a job in a cool office. I'm not trying to sit in a cubicle. So I did a lot of not giving a fuck.

That mentality toward professional shit didn't really change until I started the resource database. For the first time in my life I had to actually reply to emails. But I fully believe you don't have to want to do one thing. You can do it all!



You worked recently with brands including Marc Jacobs and Kim Kardashian's Skims. Some people took issue with your collaborations; what do you say to them?

When I bought myself a Prada bag for my birthday, I got the whole capitalism lecture. And I completely get it, but I'm going to wear Prada. I don't see people come at white people or even Black men the way they do Black women. That experience—being criticized for every single thing I did—was the craziest. When people attack me for who I work with, it's insulting. You say you respect me and are thankful for my work, but you seem to think I'm not competent enough to make my own decisions? They're like, p“Those brands are just being performative for you.” I'm Black. I think, of all people, I know when someone's being performative or not.

I'm not someone who gets invited to fashion shows. These brands do not have to give a fuck about me. I have no filter—I'm posting foreskin memes while telling you to read Assata Shakur. If I was running a brand, I wouldn't hire me. The way my mania be hitting, I'm not scared of no fucking brand.

How did you learn to embrace your sex appeal?

When I was growing up, I didn't think anyone was hot. I couldn't even think about a football player. I was like, p“Those niggas are ugly.” It wasn't until I really bagged a major crush that I was like, “Hold up.”

People are sexy when they're smart. So once I started being more confident in my intelligence, I felt sexy. Learning to accept the fact that I'm smart made me feel like, a“Oh my God, I think the smartest people are beautiful—so I'm cute.”

Did you feel that way on set for your Playboy photo-shoot with Richie Taylor?

Oh, bitch, it was fab! It was just surreal to be a Black woman and working with such a legendary publication. It felt euphoric and I think everyone on set had the same sentiment.

How have you been handling your mental health during quarantine?

Mental health is a battle and doing it during Covid is a battle. We all have stress over money and stuff. People ask, p“What would you say to someone who's depressed in quarantine?” It's like, “Girl, when you find out, I would love to know!” What helps me right now is just knowing that, honestly, everyone's fucking depressed.

It's crazy to see everyone have the same problem I've had for 20-plus years, just being depressed and shit. I've had the most unexpected friends be like, p“I'm spiraling. I'm inside, I'm going crazy.” And in my head, I'm like, “Damn, now you know.”



We're in the run-up to an election. What role do you think memes will play?

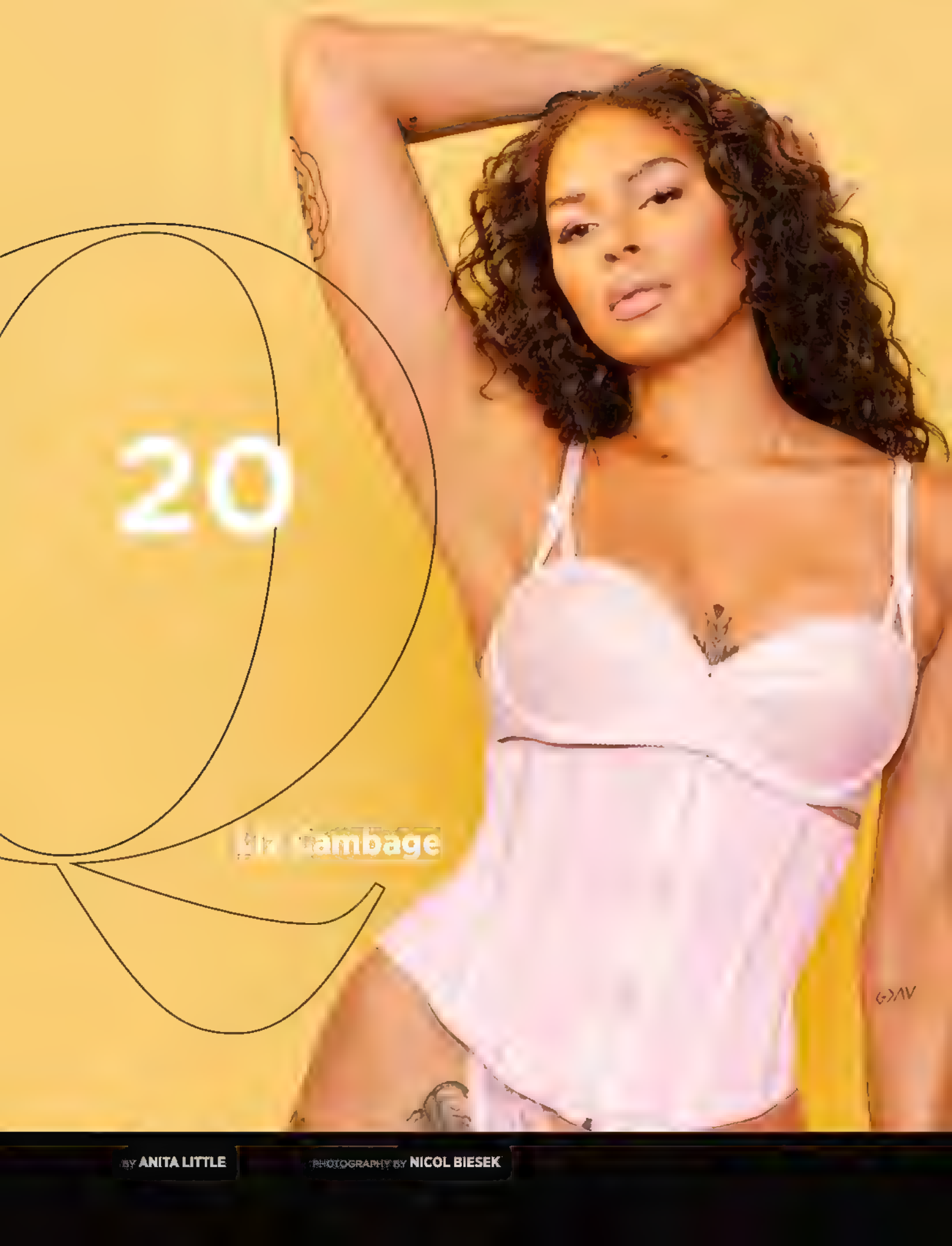
I always wanted the meme page to be something for Black people to laugh at, no matter what the fuck is going on. There are specific meme topics we post about that are political, like when we posted stimulus check memes. I don't really intend for those to raise conversation, but it's cool when they do. That's what memes do. But I feel like all we'll have after this election is Patas-FantasyWorld. I guess that's everyone's Xanax.

That's not necessarily a bad thing.

I already know what my timeline is going to look like, no matter who gets elected. We just have to keep posting memes about foreskin.







20

in **ambage**

by ANITA LITTLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOL BIESEK

She spent this season off the court, and quarantine offered time to think about who she is when she's not an athlete. On the eve of the WNBA finals, the Aussie opens up to Playboy about her walkabout of a year and the healing power of not giving a fuck.

Q1: *You celebrated your 29th birthday recently, so happy belated. With everything that has been happening in the world, this maybe isn't how you thought you would spend the last year of your 20s. What are you most proud of from this decade?*

Surviving. Still being here. The older I get the more testing and trialing I receive. So I'm just proud that I'm still here, pushing on, chasing goals, checking things off my bucket list and just living. Even in the hardest years, I have so many blessings coming my way, so I'm grateful for life every day.

Q2: *What do you hope to accomplish in the last year of your 20s?*

I was trying to chase an Olympic gold medal and a WNBA championship, but God's plan was a little bit different this year. So I'm just focusing on staying the strongest and healthiest I can because we all have no idea what next year will look like.

Q3: *Speaking of special dates, you did the ESPN the Magazine Body Issue—which features top athletes in the nude—a year ago. How has your relationship with nudity changed since that photo shoot?*

My relationship with nudity hasn't changed at all. It's interesting how people perceive nudity as a sexual thing, whereas I've grown up in a country [where nudity is normalized] and been raised in locker rooms. I'm very comfortable going to the lake or going to the beach and swimming naked with friends and it not being looked at as a sexual thing. But here in America I feel like the human body is just so over-sexualized.

The feedback I got when I did the Body Issue was very interesting. People saw it as a very sexual thing, but to me, my body is powerful. We bring life into this world with our bodies. Yet we cover them up, when we're such powerful beings. I'm so proud of my skin. I'm so proud of my six-foot-eight body and everything I can do with it. Nudity has never really been a sexual thing to me. It's always just been who I am and the skin I was in.

Q4: *You've talked a lot about being teased for your height and how you're much more confident now. What was the g"aha" moment for you? When did you truly fall in love with yourself?*

It was when I was 19. I got drafted to the WNBA when I was 19 years old. I had spent my whole life in Australia, and Australia is a very white

"Me doing Playboy is me celebrating my sexuality like, 'Yeah, I am a straight six-foot-eight woman who likes to have sex.'"

washed country. I was actually having this conversation recently with one of my best friends, who I've known since I was 12 or 13. We talked about how people literally buy the bodies we grew up being made to hate.

Both being black girls raised in Australia, we wore colored eye contacts, we bleached our hair, we straightened our hair. We wouldn't tan. We would do everything to shrink ourselves and make us more white. It wasn't until I moved to America that I started to really embrace my body and my skin color and who I really am.

Q5: *You're currently in Los Angeles, and you just did your shoot with Playboy. Do you feel this project will be a coming-out moment for you in terms of embracing your sexuality?*

I've never embraced my sexuality in public. Me doing Playboy is me celebrating my sexuality like, p" Yeah, I am a straight six-foot-eight woman who likes to have sex." I'm a human; it's what we do. As a female athlete, I feel like I'm not allowed to be sexy and I'm not allowed to be that person. All society wants from me is to sit down, shut up, go to training and play my sport.

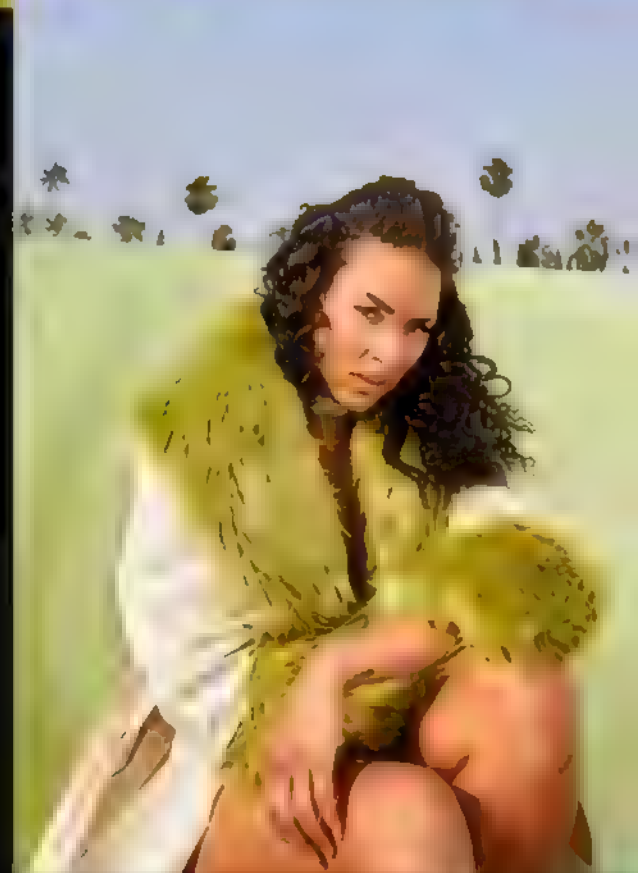
Q7: *On your social media, people seem to react to you in a sexualized way. Do you feel being perceived as an internet sex symbol helps or hinders your message of body acceptance?*

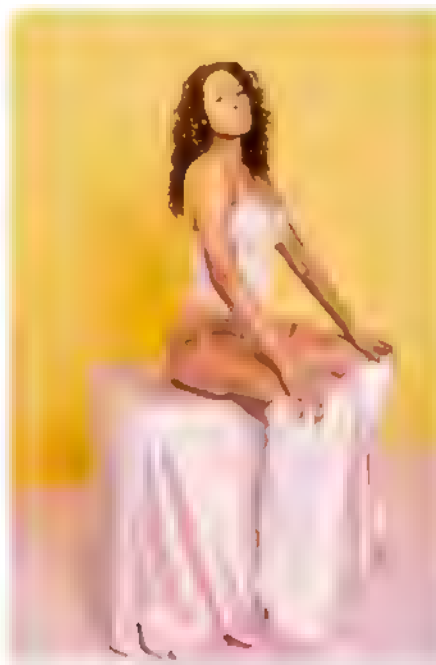
People are attracted to me, and I know the social media game. You show a bit of skin and it gets people's eye. What some people might see as sexual, I just see as comfortable. I'm comfortable hanging out in a sports bra and short shorts. But some people will be like, p" She's flaunting her sexuality." No, I'm sitting here sweating, like chilling.

If that's what catches your eye and you start watching the WNBA because you thought I was cute, that's something I'm going to use. But I work my ass off every day. I'm not just here because I'm a pretty girl. At the end of the day, my looks are not going to save me. They're not real. I'm milking it while I'm young, because I'm not going to look like this forever.

Q8: *How do you define pleasure?*

Pleasure can come from a lot of things. It's not just sexual. Pleasure is finding the good in what you want; getting what you want is pleasure. Pleasure can come from finishing my workout and having my endorphins—the pleasure of being done. It can be the pleasure of eating your favorite food or





the pleasure of making love. At the end of the day, it's all those things that make you feel good.

Q9: *You received a medical exemption for this season with the Las Vegas Aces, and you've spent quarantine alone at your house in Melbourne. How was it being home after being constantly on the move for so long? Did you feel rejuvenated or stifled?*

It was the longest I had been stuck in Melbourne for years. I have never spent that much time in my own house. It was nice at the start, and then it got to a point where I'm like, p"Wow, there's just really nothing for me." If I'm not seeing my family, if I'm not training hard every day, I actually can't be there. But I did learn a lot about myself. I'm very independent. I love living alone. I need space from people. I don't really function well otherwise. I would have lost my mind in a house full of people during this time.

Q10: *You spent a lot of the offseason raising money for first responders after the brush fires in Australia. What personal effect did the fires have on you, and what has been the aftermath?*

I'm lucky that my family wasn't directly af-

fected by the fires. But seeing the devastation—our country was literally on fire and covered in smoke and out of control for months. It went on until March. The start of Covid is when everything stopped burning.

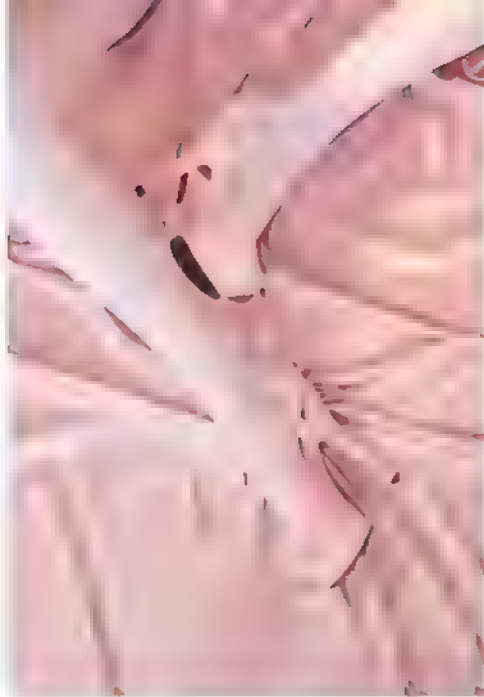
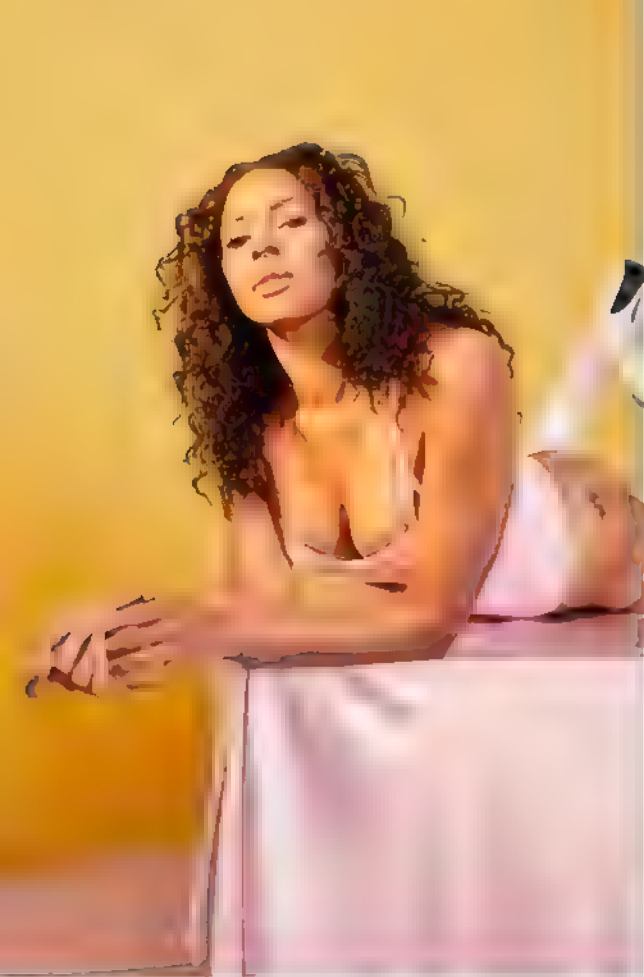
I just can't believe this year has gone from my country on fire and people losing housing, losing entire cities—we lost firefighters, we lost wildlife—to being hit with this pandemic. It's been such a hard year for Australia.

Q11: *You were in a viral video recently leading a Black Lives Matter chant with activists in Melbourne. How has your activism changed? I've been going to protests. I've been out in these streets. I've been on TV. I've been in your newspapers. I've been talking about this for years in Australia, so I'm not new to this.*

I was born a fighter. My mother raised a fighter and I am a product of my mother. Without my mom, without my grandmother, there is no me. They are my whole life. But I was raised white by my mom and my nana in a very whitewashed country. It was difficult for me to grow up. I've been bullied and teased ever since I can remember, and I've always been an easy target. So I'm resilient to it. Say what you want; it's not going to affect me.

Q12: *The WNBA has played a large role in pushing the greater sports community to be more vocal in the Black Lives Matter movement. Do you feel the work the WNBA has done has been overshadowed by the NBA?*

The NBA is always going to be on a much bigger platform than the WNBA, but what the women are doing—and what the men are doing—is amazing. We're all using our platform for good right now.



It comes from years and years of athletes being told to shut up and just play their sport and be grateful for what they have.

But what's the point of being happy with what you have when it's not good enough? We need to keep pushing for change. We need more diversity. We need to be making more money. You shouldn't stop and be happy with what you have. That's how people get lazy. To have a platform like we do and do nothing is a crime in itself. There are so many things in this world that need light shed on them, so I'm proud of every athlete using that platform right now for good.

Q13: *It sounds like you had a long journey to fully accepting your mixed heritage. What do you love most about your blackness now?*

I love that I never had to pay for a fake tan. I love that I've been kissed by the gods to have this beautiful skin. Meanwhile people spend thousands of dollars on tans and injections and things like that. I'm happy that I'm blessed to be born the way I am.

Q14: *You believe you experienced Covid while playing in China last year. Much of the narrative in the United States is that the virus only impacts the elderly or the immunocompromised. What would you say to people spouting those beliefs?*

Whatever I was sick with in December in China, it literally nearly killed me. I was on the phone to my mom screaming, p" You're going to have to come get me in a body bag for Christmas. That's going to be your Christmas." I was in a wheelchair, I couldn't walk for three days, I had never been so weak and in so much pain. It took until the end of January for me to get the phlegm out of my lungs—over a month. Whatever I had, the thought of my grandma having it—it would be

game over. That's why I've been so good during this and stayed away from my family. I just stay training with close friends, trying to stay fit, trying to stay an elite athlete the safest way I can.

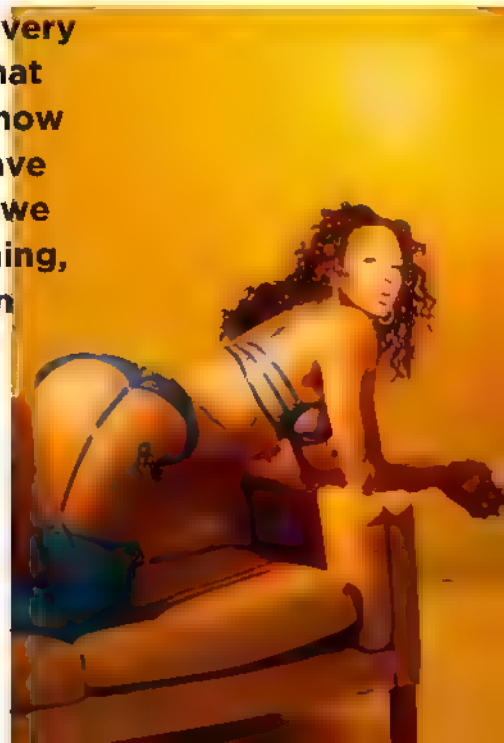
Q15: *If you weren't an elite athlete or you decided to quit the game tomorrow, what career would you be doing?*

I guess I'm lucky, I already deejay, and I own a vitamin company and a gym. When I go back to Australia, I'll be getting my personal training certificate. Something with health and fitness is my immediate future, but I'm also creative when it comes to music and design. I have too many choices for what I want to do after basketball. I don't have to stress about it right now. I'm in a very good position.

Q16: *How do you stay grounded? What keeps you humble?*

I have a lot of great people around me, and I was raised very well, I see every life exactly the same. It doesn't matter if you work at Walmart or you're banking my check. It doesn't matter if you're my teammate. It doesn't matter if you're on the other team. At the end of the day, we are all blood and bone. We are all the same, and everyone needs the same love and respect.

"I'm proud of every athlete using that platform right now for good. To have a platform like we do and do nothing, that's a crime in itself."



Q17: *Is dating a big part of this chapter of your life or is your focus elsewhere?*

I'm sick of all the in-betweens. I've spent my 20s working out what I'd like, and I know what I want in a relationship. When I'm ready it will come my way. Right now I'm focused on me. I'm focused on being the best I can be. Having someone else in my life to worry about when I'm heading into what could be the biggest year of my life with the Olympics and WNBA next year and playing back in Australia, I honestly don't have time for it. I'm willing and I'm open and I'm ready for it. But it will happen when it happens.

Q18: *What's your happy place? If you could blink and go to any place in the world right now, where would you go?*

Bali. Me on the beach, coconut oil, nasi goreng, the sound of the waves, a good book, a couple of friends. That it's for me. It's just being in the sunshine and being surrounded by good energy. That's all I need to be happy. That's real love. When this is over, that is my first stop.

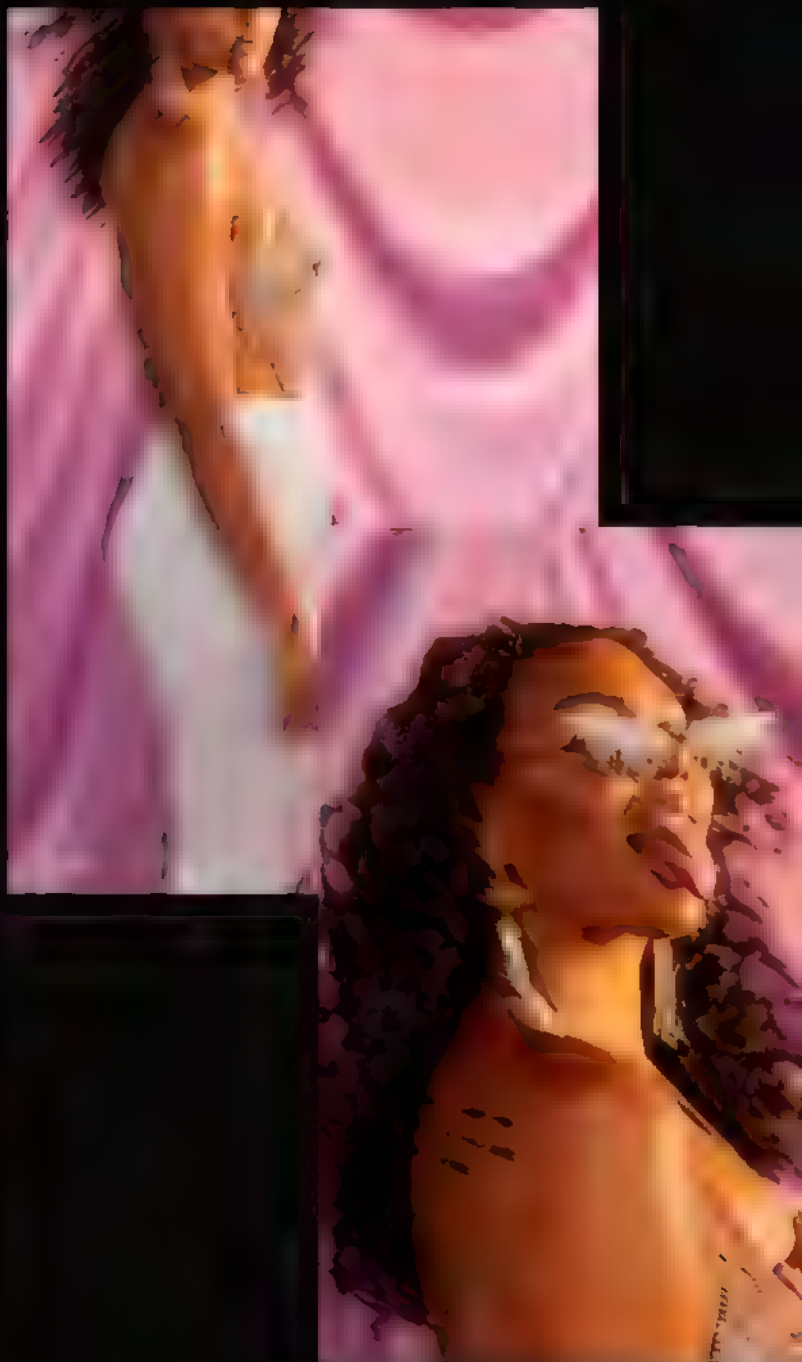
Q19: *How do you take care of yourself when you need to re-charge?*

My self-care mantra comes from the inside out. If I'm working out, I know that's going to have my body looking good and in charge. If I'm eating like shit and not doing much, that affects me mentally. As long as I'm doing the right things and treating my body like the temple it is—treating it with love and care—

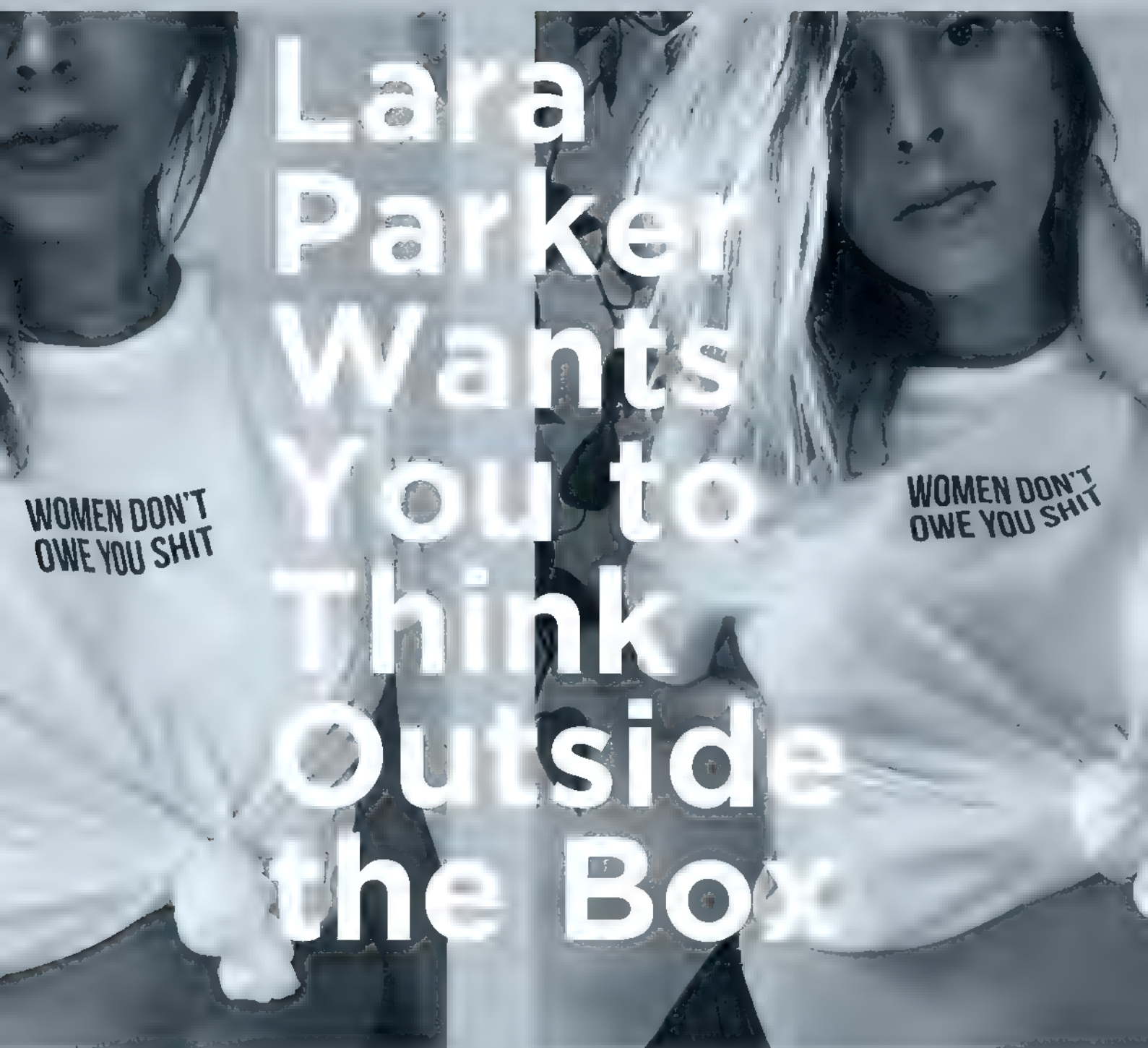
I'm glowing and looking good on the outside.

Q20: *How are you most misunderstood?*

People see me on the court and on social media as big and loud and aggressive, but I'm really shy when you first meet me. I'm not going to give you all my energy straight up. A lot of my life, on the court day to day, I have to be such an alpha female. So when I'm at home or in a relationship, I'm pretty submissive. People get confused by that or think I'm standoffish or a bitch, and I'm like, p" No, I'm just getting to know you before I give you all of me." Because I'm a lot.







Lara Parker Wants You to Think Outside the Box

WOMEN DON'T
OWE YOU SHIT

WOMEN DON'T
OWE YOU SHIT

Brunch, that quintessential, unavoidable urban 20-something diversion, replete with watered-down mimosas and overpriced egg whites, used to fill Lara Parker with a profound sense of dread.

You see, brunch, in addition to being an opportunity to snap uninspired plate pics and hashtag them #foodporn, was also story time. The cultural script dictated that you regale your girlfriends with dramatic retellings of hookup conquests and sexual misadventures.

"Going to brunch and hearing friends talk about sex made me sick," Parker tells me from her East Los Angeles apartment. "I have vivid memories of getting up from the table and running away sobbing because I couldn't stand it. It was such a trigger for me."

As someone with "vagina problems," dating and intimacy used to be fraught

areas for Parker. "Vagina problems," in addition to being the title of her highly anticipated book, was the blanket term she gave to the slew of pelvic floor dysfunctions she had combatted since puberty: Endometriosis. Vaginismus. Vulvodynia. Dyspareunia. The list went on—all words a layperson can barely pronounce on the first try, let alone spout casually over brunch. It boiled down to the fact her vagina often hurt, which meant that sex often hurt.

"I was in high school when I started to realize something was wrong," says Parker, who is now 29. "I noticed more and more weird symptoms. My stomach was always swollen, and then when I began experimenting with sex it was really painful. After a while, things started to come into focus."

For things to come into focus, Parker first had to run a gauntlet of piss-poor sex ed, careless partners and dismissive doctors, all of whom would ultimately tell her the same thing: It's supposed to hurt. That is the popular refrain, right? If you're a straight cis woman attempting to engage in penetrative intercourse, especially for the first time, you should brace for pain. This messaging has inflicted damage on generations of women who have been gaslighted into

thinking their problems aren't real.

Parker's book starts out plainly stating that roughly 50 percent of the world owns a vagina. Despite this, we barely know anything about it, while knowing almost everything there is to know about the penis. In what has to be a massive failure of medicine and incontrovertible proof of the sidelining of female sexuality, scientists didn't understand the full anatomical scope of the clitoris until 2009. Yes, you read that correctly.

Culturally and historically, we haven't cared whether women experienced pleasure during sex. So why would we care if women experienced pain during sex?

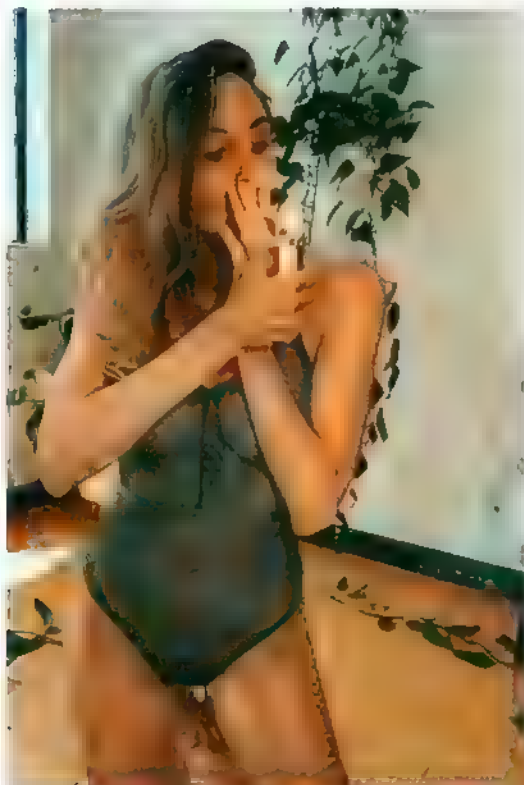
"My entire self-worth was tied up into my ability to have penetrative sex. I didn't realize how much that really did affect my self-esteem. I wanted to reclaim that."

"Sex education is just absolutely failing everyone, all of us, not just people with vaginal problems," Parker says. "Women are expected to live with a certain amount of pain, and that pain is not something people see as an issue. There's a lot of normalizing, a lot of shrugging of shoulders."

I found Parker almost five years ago when my own vagina problems sent me down an internet rabbit hole of trying to figure out why sex was so difficult for me. Despite being a sex editor at *Playboy*, for a long time my own sex life was mired by what I perceived to be personal failures. Similar to Parker and countless women who have experienced pain during sex, doctors had told me the solution to my issues was p"learning to chill" or "lubing up more" or "having a few glasses of wine first."

Once you delve into the stats, you realize how common these issues are—despite what the absence of care and treatment around the problem would lead you to believe. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, three out of four women will experience painful sex in their lives. And endometriosis, the abnormal growth of tissue outside the uterus that impacts almost 200 million women worldwide, has no cure. For some, the pain is short-term, for many others, including Parker, it can be chronic. She had tried everything: dilators, physical therapy, hormones and even out-of-pocket surgery, but relief remained elusive.

After a lifetime of being told not to talk openly about sex and to just accept discomfort and dissatisfaction, Parker had enough. Now you couldn't get her to shut up about her vagina. In her day job as an editor at *Buzzfeed*, she began documenting her journey through



personal essays (“Learning to Love Life Without Sex”), experiential narratives (“I Traveled 3,000 Miles to Treat My Endometriosis With Lasers”) and, of course, the requisite listicle (“Sex Is Painful for Me—These 9 Things Help”).

Suddenly, what was formerly private turmoil and doubt gained an audience and found resonance. Strangers began writing to her sharing their own vagina problems and how ignored they felt by the medical community. Her online following slowly grew as she became a go-to expert with experience living with vagina problems. Although it wasn’t her plan from the outset, she became the poster child for pelvic pain.

“It started out as just me sharing my life. Then when I realized I was becoming an advocate, for better or worse, for these illnesses, I really wanted to do it justice,” Parker says. “I’m a thin white woman with an immense amount of privilege, so if I can get on my Instagram and talk about things other people might not be able to, it helps to normalize living with pain.”

Her Instagram is equal parts educational and unblinkingly intimate, filled with thirst trap fodder interspersed with diary-like entries about what it’s like to cope with chronic pelvic pain. Posting sexy nudes online has become almost therapeutic for Parker since she divorced her body from her sexuality for so long.

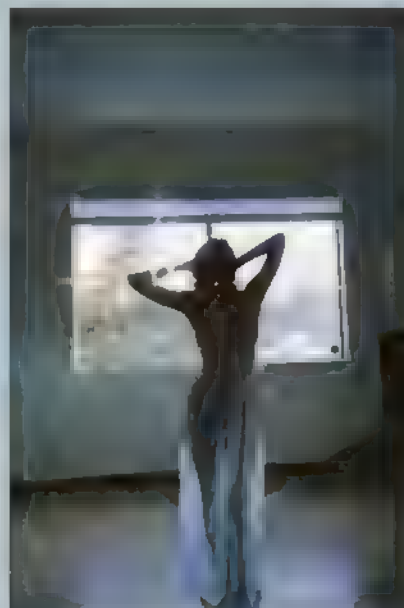
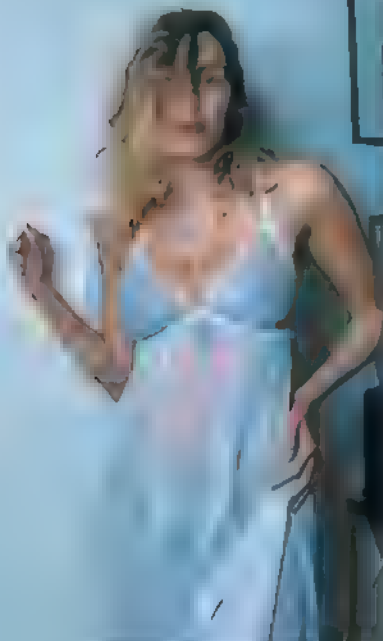
“It’s definitely part of my self-care regimen,” she says. “My entire self-worth was tied up in my ability to have penetrative sex. I didn’t realize how much that affected my self-esteem, to the point where I did not feel sexy in any way. I wanted to reclaim that.”

After I realized we had once shared a surgeon, I slid into her DMs, seeking to quiet my own neurosis that shadowed me after years of dealing with uncomfortable sex. This led to multiple conversations, during which we talked about what pleasure means, the seemingly arbitrary definition of sex and, ultimately, what we owe to ourselves.

Thankfully, the idea of sex being a penis going into a vagina feels more and more outdated when one thinks of the myriad ways the human body can experience pleasure. Knocking penis-in-vagina



sex off its pedestal makes room for LGBT couples, differently abled couples, single people, asexual people and those who deal with physical challenges such as pelvic pain or erectile dysfunction. It allows us to engage our imagination and think outside the box, figuratively and literally. The emphasis on PIV has come at the cost of exploration and expanding our bodily knowledge.



This feels especially true considering the typical length of PIV sex is around five minutes, and the majority of women don't orgasm from it. Who decided that an exercise that almost always results in a male orgasm and rarely a female orgasm was the definition of sex? (Hint: It wasn't a woman.) Many of us have to do the work of unlearning what we've observed about pleasure in the past and find new ways to think about sex. Human sexuality is so complex that limiting it to a single act feels like self-betrayal. Our sexuality is unique to us, and it's up to each individual how they express it.

"The biggest healing point for me was to realize I can still have sex; I just can't do penetrative sex because it's painful at the moment," says Parker, who is now in a long-term hetero relationship. p "We need to expand the idea of sex to include anything that makes you feel really good or intimate with your partner or partners. That could look like taking a hot candlelight bath with your partner, or doing side-by-side mutual masturbation, or just laying with one another and holding one another. It can be a naked hug. As long as both parties are getting something out of it, I think sex is whatever you want it to be."

This was something that took years of dating in the swipe-happy no man's land of L.A. to learn, and it's what ultimately freed Parker from a pattern of insecurity and self-blame. Her discovery of cannabis in 2015 was also a factor in pain management and reducing anxiety. She now consumes some form of cannabis daily, whether it's THC or CBD, and credits it with giving her back her sex life more than the cost-prohibitive and ineffective prescriptions and surgeries she had previously.

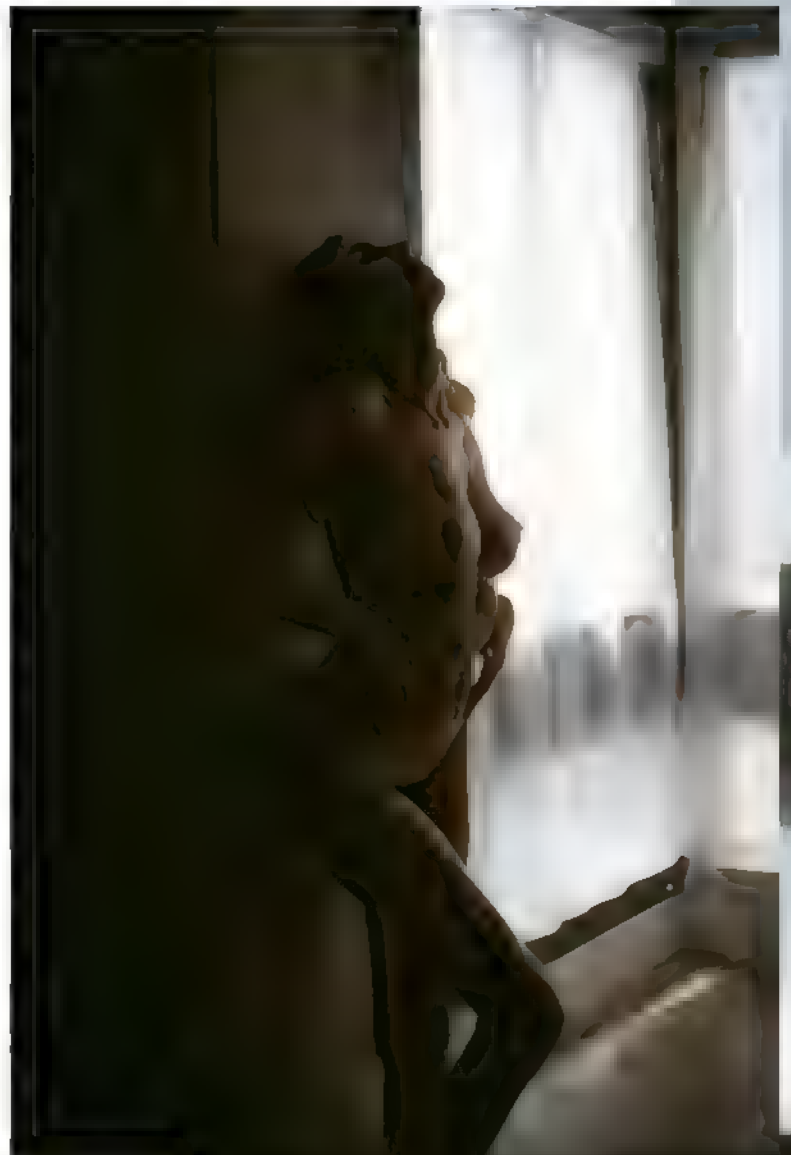
Although Parker has learned to fully accept herself and her body, she still has moments in which she desires penis-in-vagina sex.

"There's this part of me, usually on a bad pain day, where those thoughts creep in, and I really wish I could give my partner, who is a straight man, the experience of having penetrative sex with me," she says. "I want that for him, but I also want that for me."

But it no longer anchors her self-worth. On her journey with vagina problems, Parker has decided there is no p "real sex" or "normal sex." Pleasure is what we make it.

"There's many, many more days where I don't even think about it, and it doesn't even cross my mind as something I can't do because I found other ways to explore intimacy," she says. "If I feel good in my mind, body and spirit, who cares? So much of life is about meeting yourself where you're at, and sex is no different."

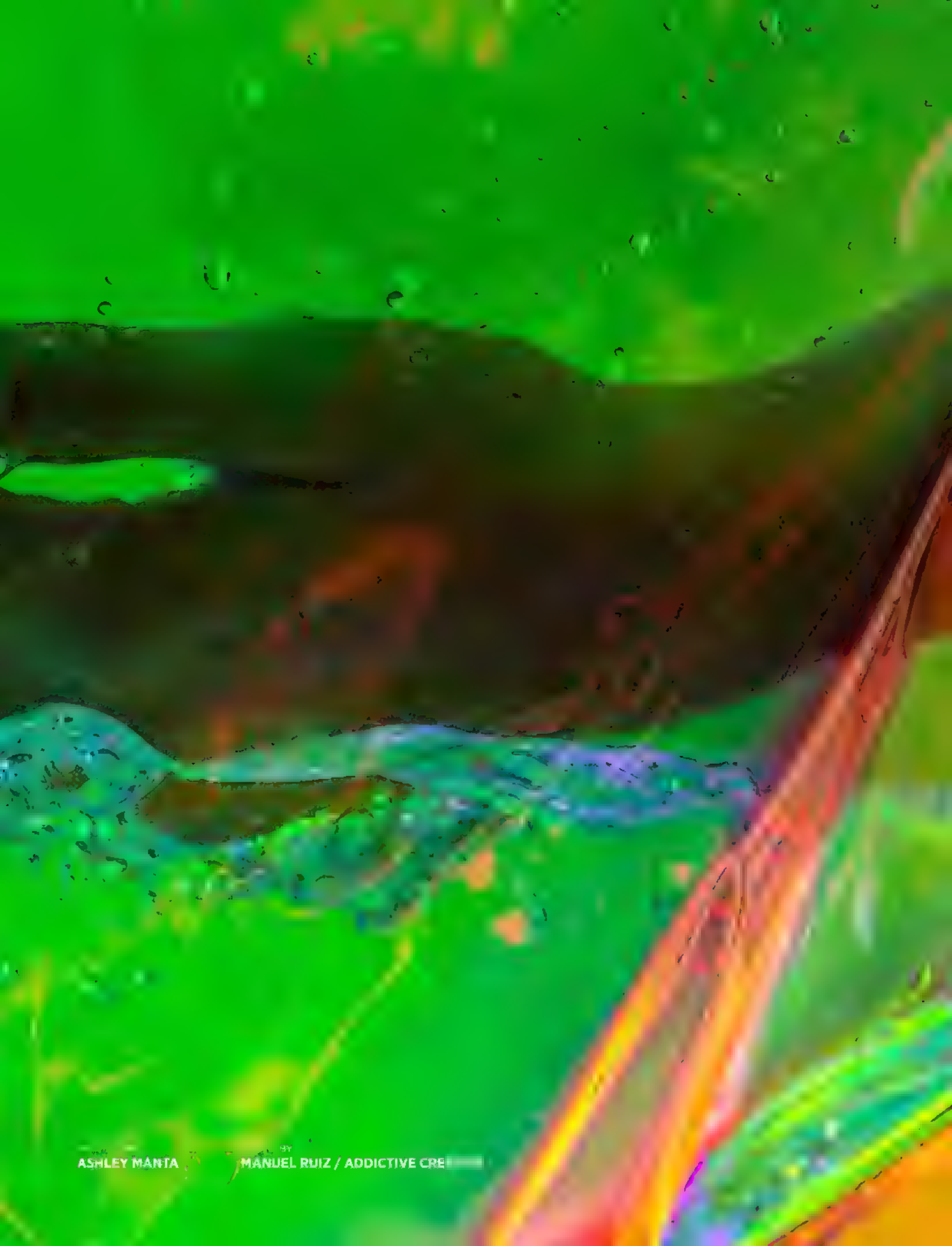
Parker has decided there is no "real sex" or "normal sex." Pleasure is what we make it.





A close-up photograph of a hand holding a magnifying glass over a globe. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger gripping the handle of the magnifying glass. The magnifying glass is held over a portion of the globe, which is visible in the lower right corner. The globe shows a mix of green and brown colors, representing land and water. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural setting. The text "In Defense of the Hand Job" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, white, serif font with a black outline.

In Defense of the Hand Job



A self-proclaimed “hand job evangelist” asks us to reimagine a tragically underrated sex act

Hand jobs are underrated for two main reasons: lack of enthusiasm and lousy PR. When I tell people I teach hand job classes, the most common response is, “Why?” People with penises scoff dismissively and assure me that no one could ever give them a better hand job than the one they give themselves. I respond confidently that although I cannot get you off faster than you do, I can definitely get you off better than you do.

Hand jobs are often relegated to a thing you did in junior high before you started having “real” sex, not a destination all their own. Although “a sad hand job” has become so ubiquitous that a Cards Against Humanity card was made for it (like I said, terrible PR), I am here to argue that hand jobs can be elevated to an art form when approached with passion and creativity.

I am a hand job evangelist. So much so that I cofounded International Hand Job Day with Timaree Schmit, and I even created a hand sex Masterclass to instruct others in the fine art of manual stimulation. I love hand jobs for many reasons, but the primary one is that they’re so versatile. There are so many things you can do with your hands! The possibilities are limited only by your imagination, and you can use countless positions.

My favorite is my signature position, the reclining diamond, in which the receiver lies on their back and the giver sits between the receiver’s legs, with the giver’s legs underneath the receiver’s legs. (If you’re into tantra, it’s basically yab-yum with the receiving partner reclined.) This allows the giver to use both hands—a crucial upgrade to the traditional single-handed hand job with the other arm being used to prop up their body. From your vantage point between the receiver’s legs, you’re able to watch their facial expression and the way their chest rises and falls, and get real-time feedback on how they’re enjoying your techniques. It also makes it easier to access the balls and perineum, which are two hot spots largely ignored during more conventional hand jobs. My other favorite position, which also allows access to the balls and perineum, places the receiver on their hands and knees while the giver sits or stands to one side and uses both hands for stroking.

Hand jobs are also versatile in that they give couples flexibility if they don’t feel like engaging in penetration but still want to explore pleasure together. They’re especially valuable if you, like me, have jaw pain or a high gag reflex or don’t like having ejaculate in your mouth.

There are a couple supplies that are useful to have on hand. (See what I did there?) I cannot overstate the importance of using lube. My favorite brand is Sliquid, and I have gone through many bottles of Sliquid Silver, their silicone lube. Silicone is silky and long-lasting, and I like my hand jobs to last quite a while! My record is 95 minutes, but I hope to one day cross the two-hour mark. Good luck giving a blow job for that long! Another helpful thing to have nearby is a hand towel for cleaning up lube or fluids after you’re finished. Plus water, for both the giver and the receiver. Hydration

matters!

A hand job really is just a genital and pelvic massage. In addition to giving pleasure, it can also be intensely relaxing for the receiver, especially if you incorporate the inner thighs, hips and pubic mound into your massage. We hold so much tension in our pelvic region, and this is a great way to unwind some of that stress. I like to begin by thoroughly lubing my hands and running them up their inner thighs, moving into a diamond shape with my thumbs behind the balls and my pointer fingers resting on the pubic mound. Then, with my dominant hand, I wrap my fingers around the shaft and squeeze to the top, thoroughly lubricating the entire area. Don’t be afraid to use pressure; it feels fantastic! A common mistake I see people making is the stereotypical “lump wrist” gesture. That doesn’t even look fun!

One of my big crowd-pleasing moves is one I’ve nicknamed the Pepper Grinder, in which you stack your hands on top of each other and twist in opposite directions on the shaft, just like—you guessed it—a pepper grinder! Don’t worry if the receiver doesn’t have enough real estate to use all of both hands, you can modify the technique by just using your pointer and middle finger and thumbs of both hands. Another move that works fantastically is called the Lemon Juicer. Grasping the shaft in one hand, you make a cup with your other hand and run it over the head in a circular motion. This can be super sensitive for some folks, so be sure to check in and get feedback! My hack for feedback. Rather than saying, “How do you like it?” try two different techniques and then ask the receiver which they liked better. You can also vary speed and pressure based on the receiver’s preferences. Some people like a slow, deliberate pace, while others prefer a quicker pace. I find people usually prefer that the pace quickens as they approach climax.

I hope these tips and reframes have inspired you. Hand jobs can be such a delight, and there is so much more to them than what we see represented in porn and popular media. Challenge your assumptions, try something new and see what’s possible! Oh, and if you use the coupon code “PlayboyAdvisor” I’ll give you 50 percent off my Handy Skills Masterclass. That’s how passionate I am about giving you the tools to tool your tool. You’re welcome.

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Congratulations on your Playboy Australia Cover!
This is your second Playboy Cover. How long will it take you?

and on the cover of Australia! Wow, this still sounds like second cover.

What do you think of when it comes to Playboy and the iconic bunny girl? Is it just the name, the image, or the magazine itself? Or is it something more? And what does it mean to you? And what does it mean to me? Often this underlying sense of playfulness

Tell us about your background... I was born and raised in Linz, in Upper Austria, went to school from 1980 to 1990, took my first job as a clerk in 1991, worked in a bank for 10 years, then moved to a company in the IT sector. I studied in the field of studies in the area of information systems and business administration. I have a degree in business administration and a diploma in information systems. I have a lot of experience with excel sheets and paperwork.

What's your favorite color? My favorite is pink. I like all shades of pink, and if there is glitter in it, it is even better.

What type of music do you enjoy most? Favorite artist? I love all kinds of music, but I like country and bluegrass the best. I like the band The Lumineers.

the car and cooking. I listen to pop songs when I have to concentrate, classical music is best. There is no favorite artist in particular.

Favorite movie of all time? Favorite actor? This is a tough question because I know I have been watching that I cannot name just one. To narrow it down, I have to go back to the 1950s. In a possible tie, I would choose *High Noon*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *My Darling Clementine*, *On a Sunny Day*, and *It Happened One Night*. I also have high respect for the same movies. My favorite actors are Tom Cruise and Chris Hemsworth.

Favorite cocktail drink? I love all cocktails with citrus, especially fruit-based drinks. However, I try to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle. I will only enjoy an occasional cocktail. I mostly just choose a nice green tea as an alternative to a green tea.

Do you prefer the beach or the pool? It depends. If the ocean is turquoise, the sand white and there are palm trees, I would spend my time at the beach. Whether I'm lounging on the lotion or taking a dip in the pool, the most important factor is simply a chance to recharge and have a good time!









Read the book or watch the movie? Generally, I prefer the book, because it contains more details. However, watching the movie adaptation is great too - it can be a fun way to experience a story in a new way.

What is your favorite body part on you? On him? Actually, I love my whole body. There is nothing I would change, because this is who and what I am. What makes me special is my hip-waist ratio, so I will go with this part of my body - and my boobs. On him, the overall impression is what counts...I like muscular men with biceps and a six-pack.

What attracts you the most in a man? My perfect partner is my soul

mate. He is strong, intelligent, and loyal, always has my back, makes me laugh and has similar values in life. And I like a true gentleman.

If you could be any animal, what would you be and why? Since I now feel connected to the bunny, I will choose it. However, no bow tie for me.

How important is working out and fitness to you? Fitness is extremely important to me. It is such a good feeling to be fit and have body strength. Working out is part of my routine, as it not only helps me perform at my best on set, but also provides me with the discipline and focus I need to achieve my goals in

my personal and professional life.

What is your favorite work out? My favorite work out is a combination of cardio and strength training. I find that a balanced approach helps me maintain my overall fitness, increase my energy levels, and improve my mental well-being.

If you could change any one thing in the world, what would it be and why? Acceptance. Being your true self and accepting the other ones for who they are without trying to change them. Let's just be happy and enjoy life.



LUST FOR LIFE

WITH GWEN
WONG WAYNE

BY GWEN WONG WAYNE

PHOTOS BY MARIO CASILLI AND GENE TRINDL



The world-hopping
Bunny and April 1967
Playmate on her
positive outlook, her
plucky persistence
and her quest for a
new kidney

My life started on the other side of the globe in Manila, in 1942. I split my early childhood between the Philippines and Australia, then moved with my family to California when I was seven years old. In San Francisco we became American citizens, and then relocated briefly to Nevada and finally settled in Ohio, where my stepfather opened the first Chinese restaurant in Cincinnati. All this globe-trotting may have sparked my lifelong passion for exploration, and my endless curiosity!

I married young and had a son. My husband and I decided to move our family to Los Angeles, where two years later my daughter came along. Soon I started looking for a paying job. I had never worked a day in my life, but I was determined to earn a living.

My aunt was a Bunny at the Miami and New York

Playboy clubs, and she had some great stories to tell about the clientele and great salary. I think she was the catalyst for my career with Playboy. It sounded like a great opportunity, so I sent in some Polaroids. I was asked to come to the Playboy office on Sunset Boulevard and meet with Dick Rosenzweig and Keith Hefner, who immediately asked if I could work at the Miami club. I couldn't leave my children, but Keith



An outtake by Mar o Casilli from Gwen Wong's Playmate pictorial



"I was never into drinking or drugs. I felt that getting high wouldn't solve my problems, and I wanted to be a good role model for my kids and take care of myself."

"Education is so important. Knowledge can get you everywhere and anywhere"

promised that when the L.A. club opened I would be one of the first to get a Bunny suit.

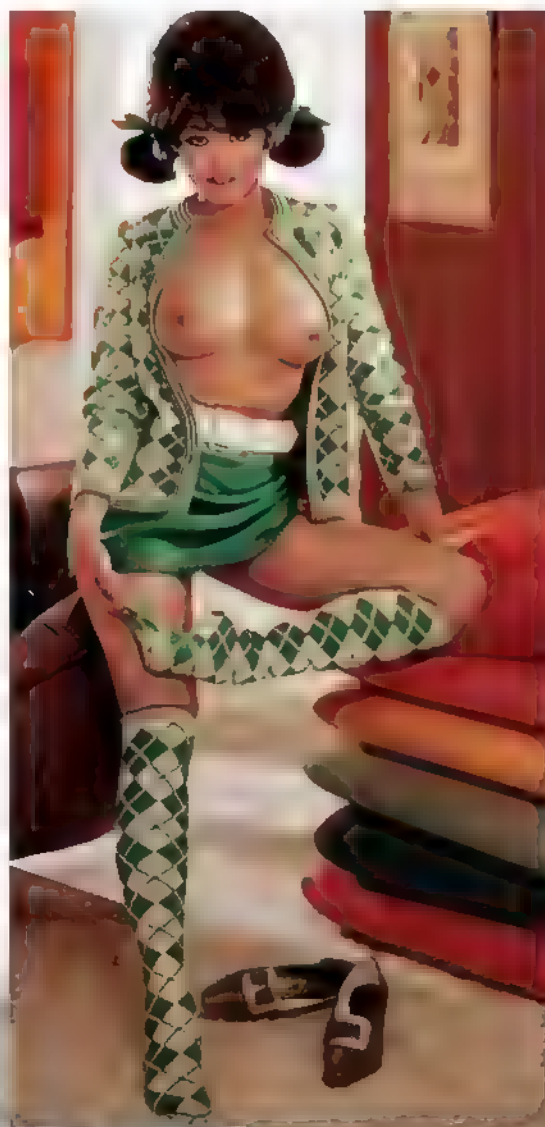
Four years later, when the club was interviewing hundreds of girls, I thought Keith had probably forgotten me. He had not. He was a man of his word, and I was in—yeah! I got a job as a Cocktail Bunny. I was so elated! At first I had a hard time learning all the drink orders, but I got the hang of it and was promoted to Training Bunny—an instructor for the new hires—a year or two later.

Early on I was approached about posing for PLAYBOY, but I was shy, so I rejected the offer. After a few years as a Bunny, my confidence grew and I felt more comfortable with the idea of being a Centerfold model. Soon I was the April 1967 Playmate—Playboy's second Asian American Playmate! Years later, Madonna paid homage to my Centerfold in a Vanity Fair photo. I was impressed, I thought it was great.

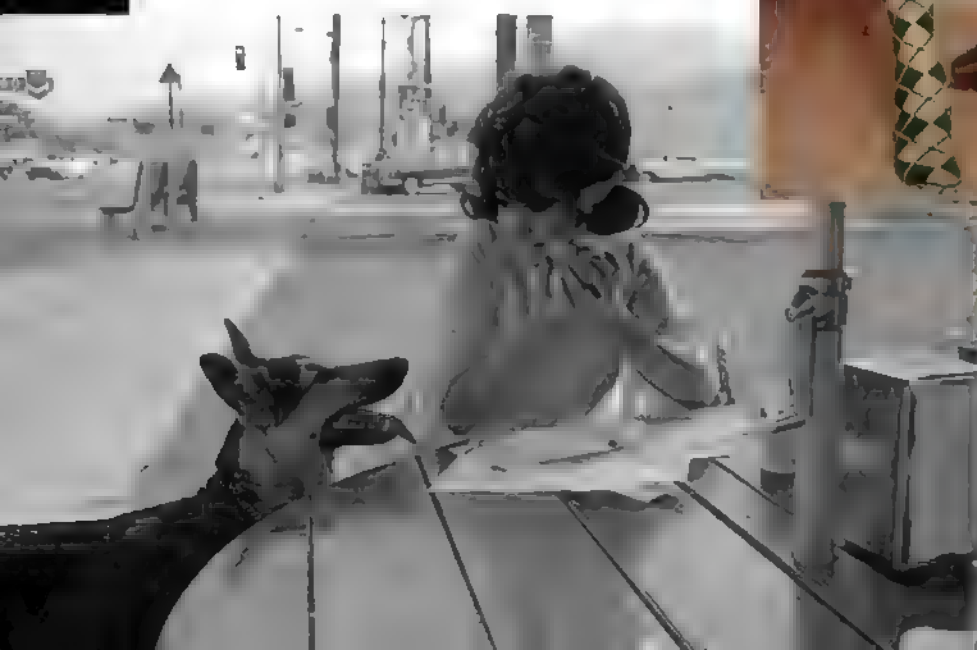
After my pictorial came out, I would go to conventions and meet my fans. The "old" Gwen would have been so shy, but working at the Playboy Club gave me the ability to communicate with just about anyone. Everyone was so complimentary, which meant a lot to me. As nice as that was, nothing compares to how I felt getting letters from American soldiers overseas in Vietnam. Their letters were so moving. I still get fan mail from PLAYBOY readers, many of whom weren't even alive in the 1960s. It's very touching, but nothing tops my mail from soldiers.

Two years after I became a Playmate, Playboy bought a luxury jetliner, nicknamed the Big Bunny, and wanted to hire "Jet Bunnies" to work on board. Every night I prayed to be chosen—I wanted to travel so badly! My prayers were answered. As a

One day I was shopping at Tiffany's, and David Bowie walked in. He asked me out, and I turned him down.



"My Centerfold photo! I look back on this image and think, Oh my God, my hair was three feet high!"



"Ever since I was young, I've been a foodie—I love cooking and enjoying food."

Jet Bunny I got to take exciting trips all over, from across the U.S. to Europe to Africa—places I had always dreamed about. I wished I could have been aboard the Big Bunny 24/7, but in between trips I kept my job at the L.A. club.

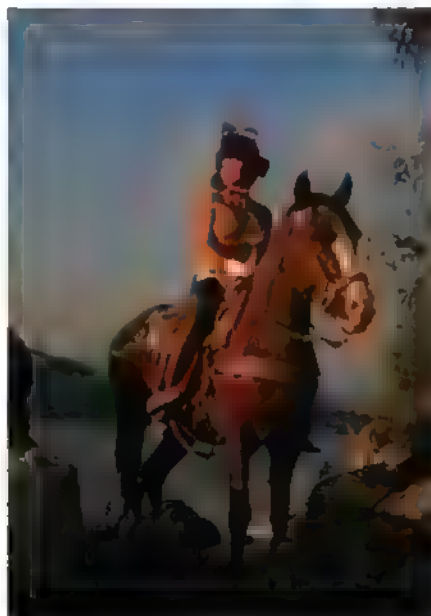
I had plenty of excitement in my life beyond Playboy too. One day I was shopping at Tiffany's, and David Bowie walked in. He asked me out, and I turned him down. Everybody was like, a "Do you know who that was? That was David Bowie!" But I didn't really care—I was too preoccupied with my kids and my work with Playboy to pay it any mind.

I loved being a Jet Bunny, but it was exhausting to co-parent two kids while being so busy traveling for work. I stepped back from the Big Bunny and enrolled at Woodbury University to pursue a bachelor's in interior design—Playboy helped cover some of my tuition and encouraged me to get my degree.

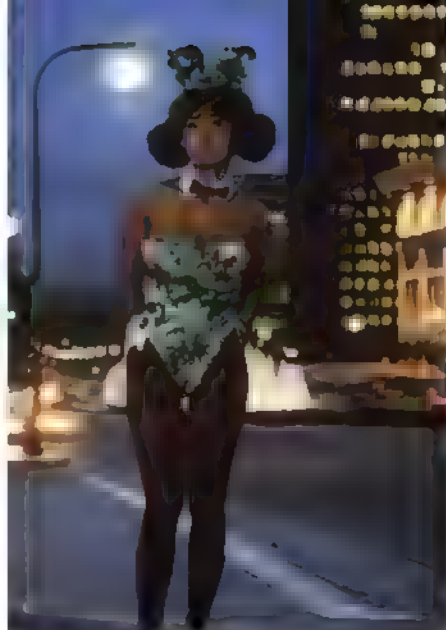
For four years I balanced Bunnyhood, motherhood and my duties as a student. I would wake up at the crack of dawn for class at 7:30, go to school, then shift gears for work, finishing at the club at 2:30 in the morning. Juggling everything was difficult, but earning a college degree was one of the best things I have ever accomplished. I never finished high school, so to earn that degree felt very validating. It's a highlight of my life because I worked so hard for it.

When I graduated, I felt it was time to retire my Bunny ears and tail. Ten years of my life were interconnected with Playboy; it was time for a change. I worked for an architectural firm and then joined CBS as a set-designer apprentice, working on the sets of shows like *Cher*, *All in the Family* and *Wheel of Fortune*. It was fun, but the 18-hour days didn't compel me to stick around.

After I left CBS, I marched into a restaurant I liked in West Hollywood and asked



Gwen at the Lake Geneva Playboy Club, photographed by Marco Caselli



"The people who came to the clubs were just trying to have fun and enjoy themselves! I never once heard a lewd comment."

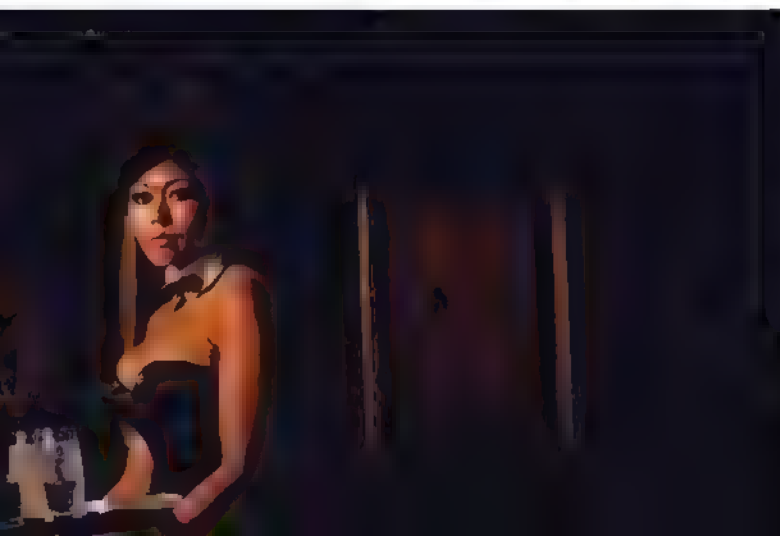
for a job. I kept going in and pleading with them until they finally relented and hired me. It wasn't glamorous work—on my first day I had to stem 20 containers of strawberries—but I enjoyed myself. I later became a food tester for *Bon Appétit* magazine, which was one of my favorite jobs because I've always been a "foodie." (I own more than 3,000 cookbooks!) Eventually I got into silversmithing and jewelry-making. I've always been creative, which I probably got from my mom, a professional pianist and singer.

I love learning new things, but I won't stick with something unless it envelops me. The same is true of my relationships—I was married two times, and each time returned to being single because marriage didn't suit me. I'm independent and like making my own decisions. I don't mind being by myself. But I have lost some of my freedom over the past 14 years because I've been coping with serious health issues. I had a disorder called amyloidosis and was later diagnosed with stage-four kidney disease. As a result, I've had to pull back from some of my beloved hobbies, including cooking, gardening, making art and volunteering. Sometimes, I've been able to combine a few of my interests into little projects. I took a six-month gardening class at a local university, then used those skills to teach underprivileged families how to grow and cook healthy food on a small budget.

Family is by far the most important thing to me. My children have sacrificed so much to help me. From morning to night, my son does nothing but take care of me; he is utterly devoted. Most people my age aren't eligible for kidney transplants, but because I've maintained otherwise good health, I'm on the list! I hope to get a kidney soon so I can not only get my life back, but also give my son his life back.

Despite my health worries, I have a very positive outlook on life. That's what keeps me going. No matter what you're going through, you have to appreciate life and everything you've been given. I have never stopped learning, loving, growing and opening my eyes to the magnificent wonders of the world. And I never will.

"I have art from all over the world around my house—it's a very eclectic collection."





The Authentic Bunny Suit

The bespoke Playboy Bunny suit is an icon of Americana and a one-of-a-kind uniform—often imitated, never surpassed

When the Playboy Bunny suit made its club debut on February 29, 1960 in Chicago, it was missing a few notable elements that have come to be an expected part of the outfit—namely, the tuxedo collar and cuffs and the name-tag rosette. Besides those key additions—and the notable subtraction of fabric via a higher-cut leg line—the world-famous costume has remained remarkably stable across the decades. Tribute, we think, to how great it was to begin with.

Here are the essential elements of the sexiest work uniform in the world



SATIN EARS

Worn crooked or straight, the Bunny ears offer the wearer a form of subtle self-expression

BLACK BOWTIE

The Playboy Bunny's delicate balance of playfulness and sophistication starts here

BESPOKE SUIT

Custom-made and hand-tailored to each and every Playboy Bunny, the suit creates a silhouette recognizable from a mile off

PLAYBOY CUFFLINKS

Bunnies ensure that the little silver Rabbit Heads on their cufflinks face each other, or “kiss.”

ROSETTE NAME TAG

The individualized nameplate is worn on the hip, which is eye-level for seated customers—learning names has never been such a pleasure

FLUFFY TAIL

The final touch to complete the costume, the tail sits centered at the small of the Bunny's back

CRISP WHITE CUFFS

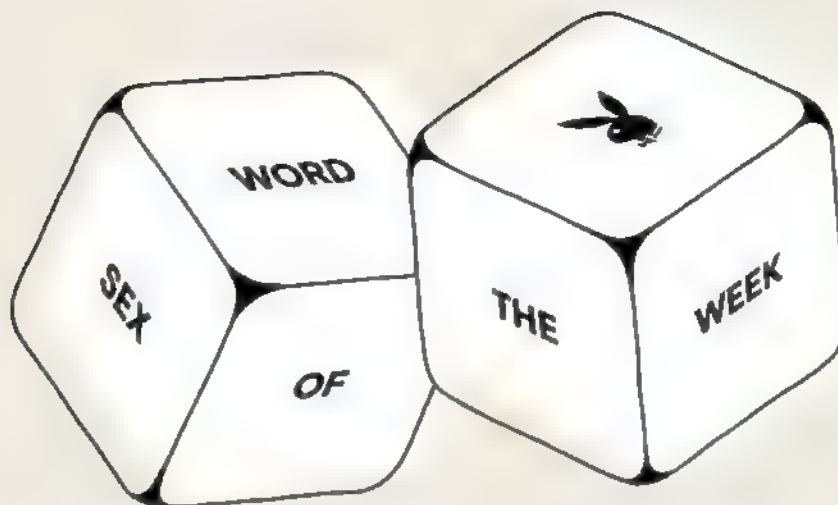
Added, along with the bowtie and collar, in 1961, the cuffs caused the world to ask, “Who needs sleeves?”

NUDE + BLACK TIGHTS

The early Bunnies doubled up, layering black pantyhose over nude tights

STILETTO PUMPS

Bunny pumps historically match the color of the suit but today are commonly worn in black.



Prone bone

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

prone bone (*n*, *v*) a sex position in which a woman lies completely flat on her stomach while a man penetrates her vagina from behind

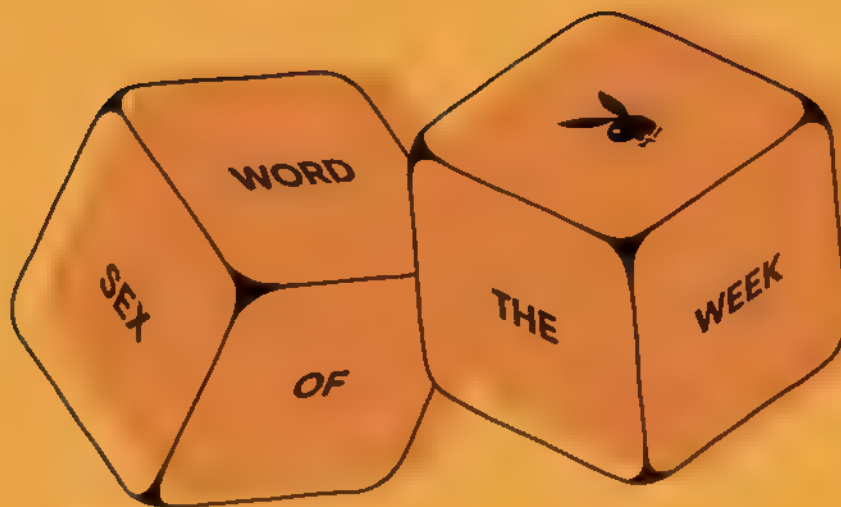
Carrie flipped onto her stomach as Jackson eagerly straddled her—prone bone always made them both climax within minutes

Doggystyle is a tried-and-true classic. Although it will always be a fan favorite, romantics say one drawback is the lack of intimacy and physical closeness. There's not as much body-to-body contact as with positions such as missionary, you don't get to face each other and there's little opportunity for eye contact—unless the receiver is extremely flexible.

We would like to introduce another rear-entry position that combines the best of doggy and missionary: the prone bone. This position, also known as the flatiron, consists of the woman or vagina-owner lying on her stomach with her legs straight and her hips slightly raised. The man or penis-owner then rests on top of her, penetrating her vagina from behind. There's increased sensation for the person on top since the position naturally squeezes the vagina together, making for a tighter feel, and there's more control for the person on the bottom since they can direct the depth of penetration by lifting or straightening their legs.

This position is a nice switch-up if you enjoy the primal nature of being taken from behind but desire the warmth and coziness of your partner's full weight on top of you. And for well-endowed men who are worried about causing discomfort for their partner, this position is perfect if you want to avoid hitting a woman's cervix. (PSA: Getting your cervix pounded is not a pleasurable experience for most women.) In other words, it hits all the right spots while missing the wrong ones.

And a final plus? Prone bone is a very easy transition into anal or just post-coital spooning depending on how young the night is.



Clowning

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

DESIGNED BY KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous
mind can imagine
it, there's probably
already a term for it

FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD
OF THE PLAYBOY MAGAZINE

THEY SAY THE SEX OF THE WEEK IS THE MOST INTERESTING AND MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE WEEKLY PLAYBOY MAGAZINE. AND IT'S TRUE. THE SEX OF THE WEEK IS THE MOST INTERESTING AND MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE WEEKLY PLAYBOY MAGAZINE. AND IT'S TRUE. THE SEX OF THE WEEK IS THE MOST INTERESTING AND MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE WEEKLY PLAYBOY MAGAZINE. AND IT'S TRUE.

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The Beautiful

HANNAH NICOLE







How do you like to begin your day? I absolutely have to have my coffee within 5 minutes of waking up, so I turn off my alarm and immediately walk to the coffee pot to make extra strong coffee with my breakfast. I prefer to wake up a little earlier so I can have a slow morning.

How did you get started in the modeling industry? What inspired you to become a model? It was honestly a whirlwind. I started shooting at a very young age and one shoot led to another. There wasn't any monumental shoot that changed my life. It was a slow and steady climb. I've always excelled in the arts, and this was one aspect that was always attractive to me. Bringing a photography concept to fruition is the same as writing a piece of music or painting a masterpiece. I love every part of creating.

Best place you have ever been in the world? I've gotten the chance to visit some amazing places. I think my absolute favorite would be Beirut, Lebanon. I've been multiple times and I just can never get enough.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I want to progress in modeling and music of course. I plan to learn more instruments. I also will be starting a nonprofit organization to give back to arts education programs in need of resources.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? I think we've all fallen victim to caring what others think. It's such a prison. I don't want to ever look back on my life when I'm

older and wish I would have not cared what people thought and done crazier things. Breaking free of that fear is key. Everyone should be whoever the hell they want to be and live as authentically as possible. I'm on the journey myself.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people? My favorite quote I live by is "If you stay ready, you never have to get ready." I never slack physically at the gym because I never want to have to "get ready" for a shoot. I'd rather just stay in tip-top shape so that whatever comes along, I'm ready for it. Mentally it can be scary being on some of the bigger shoots with full teams. I just try to remember how lucky I am to have the opportunities I do, and I try to kick as much ass as possible.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling, and what challenges have you encountered along the way? My favorite aspects of modeling are the beautiful locations I get to visit and the friends I get to network with. Having the right group of people to travel and work with makes the trips so much more meaningful and memorable. Every shoot has its challenges, whether it's missed flights, delays, wardrobe malfunctions, random sicknesses, etc. You just do your best and stay grateful for the opportunity!

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? Honestly everyone! I let inspiration flow in from everywhere. I'm always ab-

sorbing ideas.

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I'm a huge band geek. The band is the core of my soul, and I grew up around and in classical music and marching bands my entire life. I tell everyone I'm a band geek first and a model second. If you want to watch me nerd out, talk to me about marching band!

3 things you can't go a day without. Coffee is number one. I'm an actual addict. I also can't live without calling my mom every day and going to the gym!

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model so far, what would it be and why? Oh, man. Probably "whirlwind." There are so many fast-moving parts and once you hop on the ride it just gets faster and faster. It's a blessing though, because once those opportunities come you need to act on them. So, if you're just starting out, buckle up.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? I think everyone has their own unique characteristics that make them special. If I had to consider myself, I'd probably say my work ethic. I've watched so many girls given opportunities that they said "no" to because they were too tired, too busy, etc... I can't even imagine letting some of these opportunities pass me by. You just have to say "Yes" and make it happen no matter how tired, busy, or stressed you are. That's how you'll get to your end goal.









Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? One I'm super excited about but I can't reveal just yet.

Thanks so much for your time. Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? My Instagram is @hannah_nicole_8



Playboy Interview

Trevor Noah

The 'Daily Show' host is on the front lines, fighting a war on bullshit in Donald Trump's America

BY DAVID HOCHMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN LOWRY

Has there ever been a more auspicious moment to chase after clown cars on the road to the White House? Since bravely taking over for Jon Stewart as host of *The Daily Show* last September, South African comedian Trevor Noah has watched American politics burble into a molten mess of a reality series that even Comedy Central would find too ludicrous to green-light. Then again, Noah did not campaign for the role of satirist in chief; it found him. In March of last year, he

was in a taxi heading to an event in Dubai when his manager called to ask if he wanted the planet's most coveted fake news-anchoring job. This, after appearing a mere three times as a *Daily Show* correspondent.

As Noah said around the time to his friend and early champion Jerry Seinfeld, p"l get out of the car, and my legs—I didn't have legs."

Thick skin is what he really needed. The instant the gig was announced, social me-

dia cried out with a collective p"Who the fuck?" followed by a judge-y indictment over a handful of old Twitter barbs that painted the little-known comic as a menace to Jews, Ebola victims and "fat chicks." It didn't help that TV critics held Noah to crazy-high standards not to Jon Stewart's early days but to Stewart at the glorious end of a 16-year run. But the sharp-suited newcomer, now 32, settled in with polish and intelligence (and without issuing any apolo-



gies) and continues to build a following with a young, plugged-in crowd that no longer treats him like Job

Trevor Noah was born in Johannesburg on February 20, 1984 and survived a lot worse than web controversy. He grew up in the final decade of apartheid with a white Swiss German father and a black Xhosa mother who never married because mixed-race marriage was illegal in that era. Noah spent his early years in a p“whites only” neighborhood where his mom had to pretend she was the maid (His dad would walk across the street from them “like a creepy pedophile,” Noah joked in one of his routines.) After the relationship dissolved, Noah and his mother moved in with family members in the black municipality of Soweto. Experiencing such contrasting worlds made him fluent in a range of cultures and languages, including six South African dialects, English and German.

Noah’s dimpled charm and uncanny talent for mimicry led him to acting and a role on a South African soap opera in his late teens. A few years later, drunken friends pushed him to take the mike at a Johannesburg comedy club, and the dare set the stage for a stand-up career. Professional comedy barely existed under apartheid, but Noah blazed new trails, skewering elite whites, government wonks and township blacks alike. Sold-out performances at home led to tours around Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia.

In 2009 Noah’s mother was shot by an ex-husband. Noah confronted the man, who threatened to kill him, prompting Noah to move to Los Angeles. He did not immediately find a foothold there, but in 2012 he became the first South African stand-up to appear on *The Tonight Show*. A year later he was the first on *Late Show With David Letterman*. By the time he debuted as a correspondent on *The Daily Show* in December 2014, insiders knew Noah as a funnyman sans frontiers. m“Be grateful for what you have” is what South African mothers say to their kids, he told Stewart’s enchanted audience, “because there are fat children starving in Mississippi.”

Contributing Editor David Hochman, who recently interviewed Rachel Maddow and Ray Kurzweil for *Playboy*, met Noah after a *Daily Show* taping in midtown Manhattan, and they talked late into the night. m“The first thing you notice about Trevor is that he’s definitely not Jon Stewart,” Hochman says. “He’s quieter, more serious, more reflective. Then you think, Hmm, maybe that’s what we need right now.”

PLAYBOY: When you took over *The Daily Show* you vowed to continue the m“war on bullshit” that Jon Stewart began. How’s that going in this crazy election year?

NOAH: Waging the war isn’t difficult. Getting people to join you on that crusade is what’s harder than you’d expect, and not for the reason you’d expect. It’s because a lot of people simply don’t want the whole truth. They want only a mirror of their version of the truth. That’s true not just with Republicans and conservatives. I find that a lot of Democrats and liberals are not ready to hear the truth from their side. It’s human nature to look for people to validate your opinion, and I think people came to *The Daily Show* for that for a long time. But just because you have a love for a candidate doesn’t mean you shouldn’t question them. What is the point of having your candidate pushed to a certain level only to crumble under scrutiny because you didn’t give them enough scrutiny early on? Bernie Sanders didn’t have solid policy proposals, so I pointed that out. m“Screw you, Trevor Noah!” Or I made the case that Hillary Clinton panders to whatever audience is listening to her. People are like, “Who the hell do you think you are?” Come on, guys.

PLAYBOY: Any predictions on where the contest is heading?

NOAH: I have no clue, I don’t think anybody has a clue. So many truly bizarre things have happened already, particularly on the Republican side. We might see a last-minute candidate step in. The Republicans could go to a contested convention, which could rip

the party apart at the seams. Donald Trump, presuming he continues, is so divisive and so explosive that he can go all the way or else blow himself up. The enthusiasm against him is as powerful as the enthusiasm in his favor. Assuming Hillary is the nominee, people are almost resigning themselves to the fact that she’s the one. With Trump and Hillary, it’s a really strange combination of terror on one hand and ambivalence on the other. And yet, wherever we are in the general election by November, people are going to have to say, g“Well, you have to choose somebody.” Fortunately, I can’t vote in this country, which helps a lot.

PLAYBOY: You grew up under apartheid. You’ve witnessed hatred, racism, fear and a country divided by disagreement and hostility. It must be so refreshing to live in America in 2016.

NOAH: Ha. We did this thing on the show where we said Trump is basically an African dictator. We showed clips of him alongside clips of Idi Amin. They were essentially the same guy. But it’s one thing for everyone to lambaste Trump. Every candidate has a right to be crazy. Why don’t we spend more time looking at the people who voted for him? It’s his followers who are truly scary. Everyone makes the comparison between Trump and Hitler. The question nobody seems to want to ask is, Does that make America Nazi Germany? The madmen in history don’t do it alone. What’s important about Trump’s run is that it exposes the layer of hate, xenophobia and anxiety below the surface in America. That can’t be ignored. Trump’s campaign is fascinating because it threw out all the rules we’ve known about politics. Everyone had the playbook, and he went and changed the game completely. It used to be that you would release attack ads, you would point out the fallacies and people would come around to your message. Trump somehow stayed immune to that longer than almost anyone else. Whatever was thrown at him, it didn’t seem to matter. You show that he can’t be trusted, but people still trust him. You show him stirring violence, but it just makes the crowds cheer louder. He branded himself early on as the candidate who represents angry people, and that has given him a huge foothold. Those who tried to play Trump at his own game — Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio—mostly lost. He has picked them all off like a short-fingered assassin. People tried to meet anger with anger, and it failed every time. But then, if you don’t go after him directly, you look weak or out of touch. John Kasich never went after Trump. Ben Carson never went after Trump. Look where they are now. This is a popularity contest. This is a reality show. If you’ve watched any reality shows, you know the quiet people get knocked out very early in the race. The loud people are the ones who make it to the end. Donald Trump reminds me of Richard Hatch from the first season of *Survivor*. He came on, caused chaos, got naked, formed a few key alliances and walked away with the prize.

PLAYBOY: If Trump is Richard Hatch, who does that make Hillary?

NOAH: Honestly, I think a lot of people are hoping Hillary will be Barack Obama. She has said herself that her presidency will be an extension of Obama’s legacy. What’s interesting about Hillary is that she’s really versatile. She knows when to be a little tougher. She knows when she needs to be more human. She also responds to the forces around her. She saw that with Bernie Sanders, certainly. Bernie has done something beautiful in that he has inspired young people to believe again. Hillary recognized that, and she adapted. New York City mayor Bill de Blasio said the reason he wanted so long to endorse Hillary was because he wanted Bernie to push her until she was addressing income and equality, and eventually she did. She has adopted a lot of Bernie’s ideas and rhetoric, and I think that has rounded her out as a candidate. She could take it all the way.

PLAYBOY: What would it mean to have Bill Clinton back in the White House?

NOAH: That would be interesting for everyone, because we've never seen anything like it. He'll be the first gentleman. Maybe he'll be giving tours of the White House and showing people around. Maybe he'll be advising on policy. There are so many maybes, it's impossible to know. What we do know is that he's very smart, he's very involved, he's very informed and he loves talking to people. With Hillary in the Oval Office and Bill overseeing the Easter egg hunt in the Rose Garden or whatever, they could be quite the power couple.

PLAYBOY: Nobody really talks about this, but since this is Play-boy, we can ask. Do you ever imagine what their sex life is like?

NOAH: No! I don't imagine it. Never. It never crosses my mind. But if I had to guess, I'd say there's probably not much happening. Studies have shown that the sex life dramatically drops off for everyone, especially high-income, high-net-worth individuals who work hard. With these two, I don't think it's like, Saturday night, 11 o'clock, "Hey, Hillary, wanna watch Netflix and chill?" [laughs] We live in strange times.

PLAYBOY: How does the United States look to the rest of the world right now?

NOAH: Insane, pretty much. But the whole world is changing. Certainly on a political level, we're in uncharted territory everywhere you look. I mean, you see these fringe parties coming up in Germany, France and South Africa, that's because you're dealing with parliamentary systems for the most part. In those systems fringe parties don't get anywhere. The difference is, because of the American system, there is no alternative. You have two parties, and the winner takes all. It's been designed to make the strong stronger, but nobody ever anticipated that the strongest person would come from the outside. Trump could win his little ball of support and that could be it. Unfortunately, there are a lot of angry people in America. There's anger, there's hunger and there's fear, and there will always

be somebody who taps into those anxieties to further a narrative about who to hate and who to blame. Trump has been truly masterful at that. The Chinese are taking our jobs, Mexicans are rapists. Muslims are out to kill everyone. If you're feeling overwhelmed or broke or disenfranchised and someone says, "It's because of that brown guy over there," you go, "Hey, let's go get the brown guy."

PLAYBOY: Eight years with a black man in the White House does not appear to have eased tensions around race.

NOAH: This is hard to explain to white people, but the thing about race is that you can't turn it off. If you're black, you are constantly black and that blackness is always affecting you in some way or another. That's a tough conversation to have, because it can be subtle. It's often very small things, but they pile up. Cab drivers don't pick you up. It happens to me. Or you go into a corner store and get followed, or people say things about you. It's often not blatant, but it's entrenched in the system. Over time, it might change, but if you're black in the United States, even after two terms of President Obama, you still feel black. I think the benefit of a movement like Black Lives Matter is that people have seen the influence they can have by actively getting out and doing something about ending the silencing of a voice. It has been a fantastic proponent for new conversations about race, which is amazing.

PLAYBOY: You and Larry Wilmore notwithstanding, late-night

TV is a pretty white place as far as hosts are concerned. That extends to the writing staffs on most shows. Even now, Hollywood remains an old boys' network.

NOAH: I am very conscious of that. We put out a call for new people to be on the show not long ago. Around 95 percent of the people who responded were white and male. We wanted diversity. But when we went out and asked some comedians why they didn't audition—black comedians, women—they said they hadn't heard about the job. Word hadn't reached them. A lot of the time Hollywood jobs come through networks or through friends who have worked together, so it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you're not in that circle, you can't get in that circle.

PLAYBOY: Should African Americans be as scared of the police as people say they should be?

NOAH: I think black people haven't been scared of the police as much as people make them out to be, so much as they are... what's the word I'm looking for? They're enraged. They're disenfranchised because the police have been shown to not protect and serve all parts of the population equally. It's scary. Imagine if you lived in a world where every time you told someone something happened to you, it was met with disbelief and doubt, with people taking everything you say with a pinch of salt. Then you go through a period when every video that comes out contradicts the report

the police have made, which then makes you question how many of the reports we can believe. So it's a very tough conversation to have going both ways, because many police feel unfairly judged. Ironically, the way black people have been judged for so many years, with huge sections of the black population being lumped in as criminals—now the same thing is happening to police. Police are going, "There's just a few of us. Why are you saying it's all of us?"

PLAYBOY: As you look at what's happening in the country right now, are you dumbstruck, or do you just feel like it's comedy gold?

NOAH: I don't see it as comedy gold, because it's gotten to the point where there's too much comedy, and now it's so ridiculous that it's not funny all the time. When presidential candidates are making dick jokes, what are comedians supposed to do? Maybe I'm not as shocked by it because I come from a country where that happened. It got to the point in South Africa where the politicians were making the jokes.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of South Africa, what are your memories of growing up in Soweto?

NOAH: It was weird. We lived how we were living and it felt normal. So many people were born into apartheid that nobody ever dreamed of a time when things wouldn't be that way. Black people fought for freedom and independence, but I don't think many of them could say that they saw a real future where they would be running the country. They couldn't imagine gaining access to the wealth and opportunities of the country. When you're poor, it's sometimes impossible to picture living any other reality. In Soweto, you live in a one-room house, maybe two rooms if you're lucky. All the adults sleep together in one room, all the kids sleep together in another room. I'm not talking about another bedroom; you have a wall dividing two rooms. There's no indoor plumbing. There would be an outhouse, and that outhouse was shared by four or five different families. If you were lucky, you'd have running water. We

"The biggest thing I had to learn with 'The Daily Show' was that I couldn't be the anger for people."



had running water but not inside the house. It was shared among many houses.

PLAYBOY: You have a book out this fall about coming of age under apartheid. Was it comedy that got you through the hardest times?

NOAH: You would never think you could laugh about life in a place like Soweto, but there are always funny moments in every situation, and those moments do help you survive. In the book I write about growing up in an abusive household, in a house where myself and my mom were held hostage by an alcoholic stepfather. My mom was shot in the head. That's not exactly the stuff of comedy gold. But even in the darkest, darkest moments, we found things to laugh about. To have your mom come out of surgery with a hole in her face and the first thing she says when she wakes up is "Stop crying. Look on the bright side. At least now you're officially the best-looking person in the family." I mean, who says that? But that's the family I grew up in. We always found some silly way to get rid of the pain.

PLAYBOY: Your mother converted to Judaism when you were young. Did you have a bar mitzvah?

NOAH: I did, yes. My mom had always been a religious scholar and had studied the Bible. She has taken multiple Bible courses and is very religious. And one day she converted to Judaism. I had a bar mitzvah when I turned 13, but no one came because everyone in my family and my world is black. Nobody knew what the hell a bar mitzvah even was, so it was just me and my mom going, "Okay, now you're a man."

PLAYBOY: You are the first major comedian to emerge from South Africa. Are people just not funny there?

NOAH: We are an industry that's only as old as our democracy. There's comedy everywhere, but there was no free speech. I'm lucky in that I'm a product of my time. A few comedians laid the groundwork for me. I'm the second generation that got to take it to the next level and make it work on a world stage.

PLAYBOY: You've said before that Americans think of Africa as a place where people wear cheetah skins and sit around waiting for UNICEF. Will that perception ever die?

NOAH: I don't think I'll live to see it die, and that's because even if you look at America itself, perceptions die hard. I'm very lucky in that I've traveled to all 50 states, doing stand-up. I remember I was heading to Tennessee and people told me, g"That's the home of the Klan. Watch out." But then I got to Nashville and had the best time of my life with the most wonderful people. If people don't see the nuance of their own country—and this happens everywhere—I can't expect them to appreciate the nuance of Africa.

PLAYBOY: What was your first impression of the United States?

NOAH: I was like, I've never seen so much choice in my life.

PLAYBOY: What do you remember?

NOAH: Walmart. That place absolutely blew my mind. I had never seen anything like it. Seventeen different types of milk. Twenty-two kinds of laundry soap. It is a land of unimaginable abundance, though it wasn't a complete surprise. You get a sense of the abundance when you watch American television. Just the fact that everyone in sitcoms has a house with an upstairs area is astonishing. A house with a second floor? As an African kid, you're like, Hey,

who lives this way?

PLAYBOY: As you developed your comedy, who was your biggest influence?

NOAH: I watched a lot of Bill Cosby. I love Dave Chappelle. But I specifically remember seeing Eddie Murphy's *Raw* on VHS and thinking, Holy shit! The guy from *The Nutty Professor* does stand-up? It was a complete awakening for me because I was starting to do stand-up myself. Eddie is incredible. The honesty, the precision, the talent, the skill. Everything he executed was perfect. His impersonations. The way he walked across the stage. His command of the audience. Eddie watched my stand-up once, which was enough for me to go, I can die now. That's all I need in life.

PLAYBOY: What about up-and-coming comedians? Who's the future of comedy?

NOAH: Michelle Wolf is hilarious and outrageous. She always makes me laugh. A lot of people don't know her yet, but they will. You can see her on *Late Night With Seth Meyers*. If you look on YouTube or Vine or Instagram, there's a guy named King Bach. He's huge online, but people don't know him in the streets. He does short-form sketches. He's a very funny actor who, because of social media, really made something for himself, carved a path, which I admire. One of the things I love about America is there's so much comedy. There's the alt scene with people like Kumail

Nanjani. There are the hipsters, who have a very different style of comedy. There are the mainstreamers. There are black comedians who cross over and do well with white audiences. There are a few white comedians, like Gary Owen, who do particularly well in the black scene. Just look on YouTube. They're all there.

PLAYBOY: It seems technology is changing everything about comedy. You no longer need to join the Groundlings or book a set at the Comedy Store to find an audience.

NOAH: Technology is great for the industry. Comedy is a form that works wherever people are funny. There are people who do comedy shows in the back of a van, in a bus, in a venue, in a small room, a giant room, theater, hall, church, restaurant, phone booth, and all you need is a tiny handheld device to record yourself doing it. When you go to a place like the Edinburgh Comedy Festival, you see all those things happening all over the city, and you realize that comedy is one of the most versatile art forms we have. YouTube has opened that up completely, and you have Snapchat and Instagram and other vehicles as well. But I think these formats will come and go. The important thing is that young people get to express themselves to an audience directly rather than looking to the gatekeepers to let them in. At the same time, the audience is expanding in ways that were unimaginable only a few years ago. Think about the fact that you used to have to be 18 or 21 to get into a comedy club. Now there are 10- and 12-year-olds who know Mitch Hedberg and Louis C.K. and many more obscure comedians because, again, it's all just part of the deluge of information available on your device.

PLAYBOY: How did your social media habits change after old tweets of yours surfaced that some called racist, anti-Semitic and sexist?

NOAH: The irony is that people had to go back five years to make a judgement about who I am today. We live in a world where you

"With Trump and Hillary, it's a strange combination of terror on one hand and ambivalence on the other."

need to form your opinion about someone instantly. Ever watch the Grammys and read Twitter at the same time? Before the first presenter even appears, someone is already going, "Worst Grammys ever." It's not a 24-hour news cycle anymore. We live in a 24-second news cycle. I guess the lesson is: Some people will always want to take you down. If you say something silly, it can blow up. But also, it passes.

PLAYBOY: How much do you and your writing team focus on creating material that will go viral online?

NOAH: I don't believe in working toward a moment just to have a viral moment. I believe in doing what you love and if a moment resonates, it resonates. The Daily Show is different in that it is not all about sound bites and tiny moments. That is a fact of the show that I have to accept. But I won't lie, it's nice when you get a moment that goes a little viral. I'm always surprised at which moments take off, to be honest. I create each moment equally, and when one element hits, it's often foreign to me. Lindsey Graham came on the program and was one of the most engaging guests we've had. We played this game of pool where if you missed a shot, you had to give Donald Trump a compliment. That got a lot of attention. Trump tweeted insults at us. I would have never wished for Michael Hayden, ex-director of the CIA and the NSA, to come on the show, but honestly, I had some of the best moments with him.

PLAYBOY: How much rivalry do you feel with your late-night competitors?

NOAH: Because I come from the world of stand-up, I realize that success is a cycle. People rise and disappear, they succeed, they miss, they return. As competitive as it is, you learn to celebrate the success of your peers because you know how hard that cycle is. I remember when I first came to America, Amy Schumer was running around doing comedy clubs. She was funny, but she was nowhere close to where she is now, and I loved what she was doing. Then you see her hit her stride, and it's beautiful. There's nothing more fun than seeing a comedian come into their own, especially if you've watched them on the rise. So for me, it's Amy Schumer, it's Jerrod Carmichael, it's Hannibal Buress, it's Michael Che. It's people where I go, Man, we are the class of now. In late night, I think every host will tell you the same thing, which is that we don't have time to focus on what other people are doing. We're too busy making our own shows. Obviously I see occasional clips of what Stephen Colbert and James Corden and Jimmy Fallon and the rest are doing. But the only person I have time to watch regularly is John Oliver, because he's on Sunday evening and I'm free to watch. I loved what he did with Donald Trump, for example. That was amazing. John for me is an inspiration because he shows me the possibilities. Before him I didn't believe a foreigner could do a TV show like this in America, and I love him for that. Had he not taken over for Jon for a few months and then gone on to host his own show, I don't know if the network would have said, "Okay, let's give Trevor Noah a shot." It seems less crazy to have some random African guy host the show after some random British guy has hosted his show successfully.

PLAYBOY: Many people think Jon Stewart and The Daily Show played a role in getting Obama elected in 2008 and 2012. How much influence do you feel you have in this presidential race?

NOAH: Oh, I haven't earned any influence yet. That's something

you work toward. Jon had that effect on Obama's rise because of how long and how hard he had worked and what he had been a part of. What people forget is that the first few years of Jon's show were barely a blip on the radar. I'm still in the blip stage.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever call Jon and say, "Dude, remind me again how you do this?"

NOAH: No. Never. I mean, I talk to him sporadically, but it's about random things. The last conversation we had was about stand-up. I wanted to know if he was working on a new hour. How's the set going? Any fun jokes? That was literally the conversation we had. That's not to say I haven't had moments of anxiety about The Daily Show or needed guidance. I was terrified in the beginning, and I still have some sleepless nights. Are you kidding me? There are nights here and there when I go, Shit, what do I need to do? What am I doing? Where am I going? Because I love what I do and I believe in giving it my all. But I don't let that consume me.

PLAYBOY: Who has given you the best advice?

NOAH: Jon said, "Don't listen to anyone. Just make the show you believe needs to be made." Jerry Seinfeld was supportive long before I got the show. That helps in general with confidence. Louis C.K. said to me, "Regardless of what happens, don't forget to enjoy every single moment, because you can never get it back." He said, "One day you'll go, Man, remember that time when no one believed

in me? Remember that time when no one thought what I was doing was good? I didn't take the time to enjoy and savor that moment." Amy Schumer just looks at me and goes, "Fuck it, have a good time."

PLAYBOY: What do you do for fun, by the way?

NOAH: I love boxing. I ride bicycles. I love roller coasters. My dream is to go on a tour and bounce around to every great roller coaster in America. But I'll settle for another ride on T3 at Six Flags. I love the feeling that you're going to die even though you know there's no chance of being harmed.

PLAYBOY: What are you listening

to these days?

NOAH: I'm listening to the new Kendrick Lamar, untitled unmastered. I'm listening to the new Rihanna. I listen to Otis Redding almost every day. He just makes me happy. I like the most recent Justin Bieber. You may not like him; you may not like how popular he is, but don't deny his talent. The guy learned to play musical instruments, worked on his singing, worked on his dancing, worked on his social media. That's why he is where he is.

PLAYBOY: How about TV? Do you binge much?

NOAH: I do. I watch House of Cards, Game of Thrones, Broad City, Nathan for You, Billions. I just finished watching The Bachelor.

PLAYBOY: Any fanboy crushes?

NOAH: Charlize Theron. Not just because she's South African. I think she is aging majestically. She's so beautiful. Jennifer Lopez as well. Does she even have an age?

PLAYBOY: No doubt your dating life has improved since getting the show.

NOAH: Things are good there. I have a girlfriend. But yes, you definitely get more attention all over the place. You suddenly become a little more good-looking, a little funnier to everyone. Remember, though, that I had some level of notoriety for a very long time. It just moves from place to place. I mean, don't get me wrong, getting



the show was huge because I understood it was going to change my life forever, and it has. American fame takes everything up a level. Seeing your face all over New York City—no one can deny that's an insane experience. It's New York fucking City. It's the Sinatra song. It's Jay-Z. It's Beyoncé. You can't deny what it is and how weird it is, even though many people still don't know who I am. But put it this way: I'm very lucky in that if this had been my first experience of fame, I probably would have caved, I would have crumbled. I would have gone mad. You can't go from zero to The Daily Show.

PLAYBOY: So many comedians get caught up in drugs and alcohol. Have you struggled with that?

NOAH: No. Never have. I've never smoked pot. I've never smoked, period. I was never drawn to it. I'll have a few drinks occasionally. Sometimes I regret the fact that I missed that era, because that's what comedy was all about at one point. Comedians were rock and roll. Now you go to a comedy club and comedians are ordering kale salads and telling you about how they're going to the gym in the morning, which is really interesting to see, because comedians were the first ones who switched over. All comedians used to be drunks and drug addicts. You'd hear about a suicide in the community every single week, and that has slowed down dramatically, which is fantastic.

PLAYBOY: It is often said that pain is the source of all comedy. There's the need to have people laugh at your jokes, the need for validation. Is that part of who you are?

NOAH: It's part of most comedians. It's our dark bond. We all carry the heavy burden of depression in a different way. We all deal with it in different ways. For most of us, our therapy is on stage. I meditate. I exercise. I always try to aim toward the light in life. I surround myself with positive people. I move toward positivity. I try to find the things that help me quell that voice in my head. It's one of the reasons I love Kevin Hart, who was the first guest on my show. Comedy was associated with skepticism and a general pessimism for so long, but Kevin came in with positivity, and he still does. Look at his Twitter. He's eating right, working out, adding value to people's lives. I'm glad for his success because he shows there's another way to do it.

PLAYBOY: Does earning more money make you happier?

NOAH: Ironically, I'm not necessarily making more money as host of The Daily Show than I was before. I was doing very well for myself as an artist, as a businessman, as a performer. So it's not a lifestyle change for me. Mine is not a Cinderella story. You know, it's good to have enough money. I like to splurge on friends and family and people and charity. I like watches. I guess growing up

with a Swiss father will do that. I don't buy expensive watches, but I like unusual ones. I have a Hamilton Jazzmaster Face 2 Face, and there are only 888 of them in the world. I love the fact that it's a watch whose face flips over to another face, which makes it two different watches in one. The biggest thing I have learned in America is that it is expensive to be famous here. You have to pay for things. You have to pay for bodyguards. You have to pay for a driver. You have to pay for a publicist. You have to pay for a stylist. I never used to understand the stress around those things. I never experienced that, and I still try to not experience it. I tell people, "I have a stylist at the show, but if I go to events, a lot of the time I dress myself." I'd rather give the money to starving children. So if you see me dressed really trashy somewhere, know that some kid somewhere got a meal. Honestly, having possessions gets boring. At some point, you have all you can have. I completely understand

why Bill Gates is working to eradicate malaria. Yeah, he can own 10 Bugattis, but so what? He can drive fast in a straight line. It's much more exciting to fix problems, education, help children. Maybe it's my African perspective on the world.

PLAYBOY: You have a keen ear for language. What are your favorite Americanisms?

NOAH: Rah, rah, rah.

PLAYBOY: Come again?

NOAH: When Americans try to show you that they're keeping up with what you're saying in a conversation they say, "rah, rah, rah" as in "right, right, right." Which is the weirdest sound to me. You go, "Make a right turn at that corner" and they'll interrupt with "rah, rah, rah" to speed you along. When I first heard it, I was like, What's going on? Then there's the suggestive nature of a request. "So do you want to go ahead and pass me that water?" That's such a strange way to say it, instead of "Please pass me the

water." "Do you want to go ahead and turn the lights on?" What do you mean? Is that a request or a command? What if I don't want to do it? You could have just asked me to do it. It's strange quirks that I pick up on. I've also had to monitor myself with some South African words and phrases. People here don't really understand the word *ag*. It's an exclamation. "Ag! What a nightmare!" Also, *esh*, as in "Where's my phone? Esh. I left it at home."

PLAYBOY: So do you want to go ahead and walk us through the process of putting together The Daily Show?

NOAH: Wake up at seven. Spend a good 10, 15 minutes meditating, just taking time to prepare myself for the day. Then I'll read the news, as much of it as I can. It's usually The New York Times, The Washington Post. It's BuzzFeed News. It's The Skimm, which is a daily newsletter that pulls together the most interesting reads of the day. I'm a big fan of Vox and everything Ezra Klein is doing. I



really love German Lopez, I love Rachel Maddow, I'll do a bit of a workout just to get the body moving, and I'm at work by 9:15. We've got a big team. Making TV every day is a very tough job, so there are about 100 people helping in various ways. Around 20 of us will gather in the morning to figure out what the show is going to be. We talk out all the possibilities, and then I make my decisions based on a few things. Number one, is it interesting? Number two, is it funny? Number three, do I have something to say about it? That's what I look for. You know, Lindsey Graham saying the choice between Donald Trump and Ted Cruz is like being shot or poisoned, you're going to run with something like that. I always go, What would I share with my friends? Because that's the way I see the audience

PLAYBOY: What adjustments have you made along the way?

NOAH: I had to learn that I couldn't manufacture anger. I couldn't manufacture outrage. I understood that a lot of people looked to The Daily Show for their catharsis, but I think a lot of people maybe also got lazy in that they stopped fighting for change. Jon was very good at articulating a feeling for many people, but I think we also evolved into an age of couch-place activism, where people just sit on their couch and hashtag. Whereas where I come from the idea is that you go out and you do something about it. The biggest thing I had to learn very early on with The Daily Show was that I couldn't be the anger for people. I had to find an audience in the same place that I was in. I had to find the things that interested me and the things I found funny and had to believe and still have to believe that there are enough people like me who will experience the world the way I experience it.

PLAYBOY: You spend less time actually sitting at the desk than Jon Stewart did. Is that intentional?

NOAH: It's funny. In my head I go, I didn't work all these years to get a desk job. I sat because I was told that it was the format, because that's what everyone did. Then one day I stood because I was like, This is who I am. This is what I do. Standing up is how I got here.

PLAYBOY: You continue to do comedy on the road even with your busy schedule.

NOAH: I have to. Stand-up is where I live. Stand-up helps me articulate my point of view. Stand-up helps me exist in my purest form, and that is talking to people, sharing and discussing ideas. I try to go out every second weekend. Honestly, that's where I feel alive. I get to relax. I get to explore myself, and I get to see America, which is very important to me. I find it weird to live in a place and comment on a place but have a level of ignorance. More than that, it's easy to get caught in this world between you and the camera and random reviewers. You have to remember what human beings are. If you live in an echo chamber, you run the risk of believing you know everything when in fact you know nothing.

PLAYBOY: If the show ended tomorrow, what would you do?

NOAH: I would pick up my U.K. tour where I left off. I would go back and carry on touring Australia. I would go and do my shows in Germany. I would do more shows in South Africa, maybe start some TV shows somewhere else. As long as I'm doing comedy, I'm alive.







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How do you like to begin your day? With a smile and a delicious fresh fruit and ginger smoothie

How did you get started in the modeling industry? What inspired you to become a model? I started through the director of an important Spanish magazine who noticed me in the VIP area of a nightclub. He asked me to do camera tests and directly handed me over to the cover

Best place you have ever been to in the world? Miami

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I would like to be a sexy businesswoman haha I have some housing projects and I would love to live in Miami

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? Being able to communicate and express ourselves freely.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling, and what challenges have you encountered along the way? My ability to be such a chameleon in front of the cameras and any challenges I have had such as posing in lingerie in 10-degree temperatures

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? In her day she admired Gisele Bündchen. A very exotic beauty

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? My extreme and morbid beauty

3 things that you can't go a day without. Without my perfume, without my lipstick, and my long walks.

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model so far, what would it be, and why? Inspiration I have always been in love with the world of fashion and beauty, I am independent and a fighter to achieve my dreams.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? My extreme and morbid beauty.

Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? I am a frequent guest as a model on a television program called "Toni Rovira y tu" is a late night of artists that is broadcast on different TV channels in Spain that have been for 24 years

Thanks so much for your time, Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? In my IG @ barby.mc





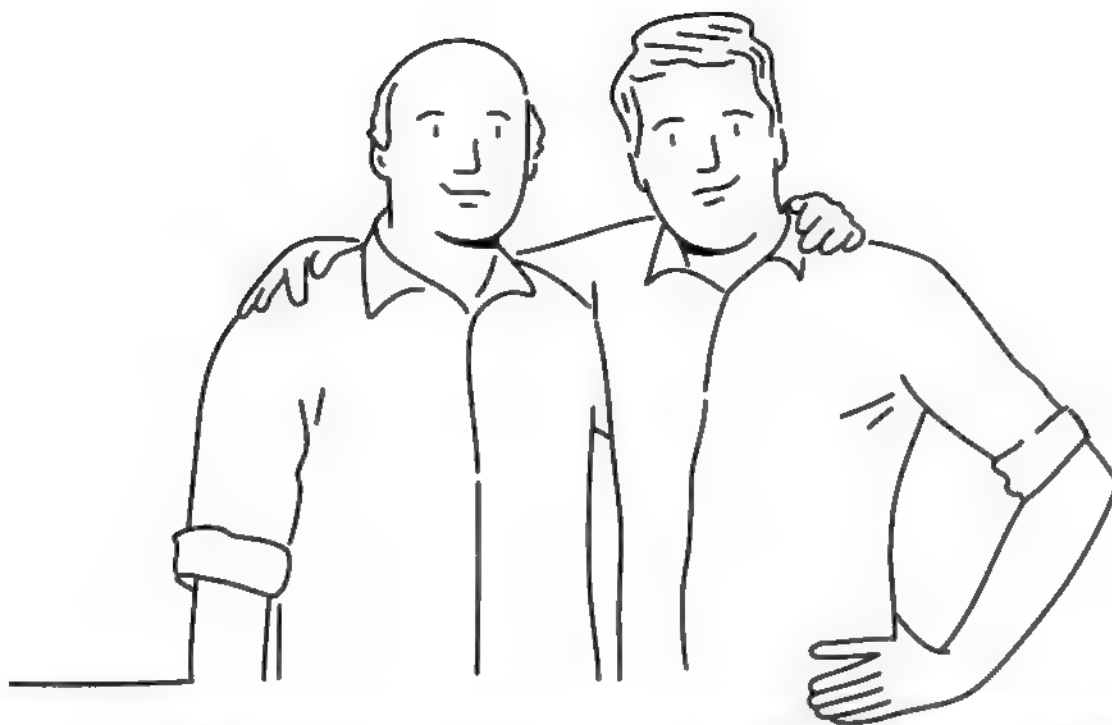


TWO STRAIGHT GUYS

HAVE A GAY
TIME IN THE
COUNTRYSIDE.

BY IAN KIRKE





COVID-19 has forced many of us to reconstruct our leisure time. West End shows have been replaced by a slow shop in Waitrose whilst the car boot experience has been substituted by a meander around Aldi. The centre aisle of the budget supermarket is a cornucopia of chattels from mini flamethrowers to violin cases and the odd special – a shower curtain with inbuilt xylophone! Outdoor exercise has become the principle national pastime and our parks and open spaces have never seen such regular activity.

As the UK restrictions eased the trigger dates have celebrated the much-needed association with others. My bubble needed bursting and when a friend called and asked if I wanted to accompany him on a walk in the countryside, with water and a pub nearby the answer was heartily in the affirmative. So, two guys in their fifties with more hair on their backs than on their bonces checked out the weather and plumped for a hot one. When we excitedly shared our plans to our nearest and dearest a strange, yet consistent, commentary erupted around us. "Enjoy your date with your bum chum!" And, as the days ticked by, I was eventually labelled with the infamous insult, first launched by Will in the Inbetweeners, "Bumder!" Blimey! I was only going for a frigging walk!

When I met up with my friend Chris, he disclosed that even his daughters had asked him to explain why he had chosen to spend time with me, in the open whilst

deciding to wear natty shorts and a pair of expensive shades. Even his ex-wife text him and said, "Who would have thought that you would be spending a romantic time with Kirkey when I was looking after his pussy!" Just for the record she has adopted my cat. We both laughed, but even our thinking had been disturbed by this onslaught of innuendo as we decided not to sit together on a two-seater bench. Would the same connotations have been so immediately connected to a couple of ladies who had sought company on a stroll? I can't recall any occasions when I had to remind the women in my life to slip a strap-on into their shoulder bag. And what experience did our teasers actually have of the gay scene?

When I was in the police, I vividly remember sitting down with my new boss who rattled through the names of my team on the Slough & District Police Area. "John, he's destined to become a detective, Jayne is public order trained, Dave is gay, and Leigh is a probationer." Without skipping







What beat Dave's sexuality was earmarked in the same manner as any other police discipline. Almost as if he had been on a four-week residential course at the force training centre to master the art of being gay.

My own latent prejudice came to the fore when I first met my new team and I instantly spotted Dave - the smartly groomed chap in a crisply ironed shirt. John wasn't that impressed, and my gaydar was thrown into a tailspin when I realised that Dave was the scruffy fucker who rarely went on patrol with a pen, let alone a hat.

Dave Gates, who sadly passed away a few years ago, became a close friend. He was funny, intelligent, rebellious, and fiercely loyal. The time I spent at Burnham, a substation within the greater Slough metropolis, was incredible, made even more memorable by the cosy chats Dave and I had, often on nights, in a patrol car or over a coffee in the custody block. I recall one conversation in which Dave openly argued that us heterosexuals made hard work of sex. He explained that when in a gay club if he saw a man who was his type, he would simply introduce himself and state his intentions. If both men were matched sex would inevitably follow. However, a mismatch would result in a cordial rebuff. He had a point! How terribly British I thought. I would have to buy flowers, cinema tickets and a meal, at least, to stand a chance of the same outcome. Although he did point out that straight and gay men did have one thing in common - we had to fancy our respective sexual partners. I never had the courage to ask Dave if he fancied me. Being straight doesn't mean that you can handle rejection any easier.

As Chris and I continued our wonderful saunter I knew that I didn't fancy him! But what we shared that day was far more important - an intimacy of conversation about life, children, relationships, and the universe without the pre-COVID backdrop of a packed pub, a football match, or other like venue to support this liaison. It suddenly dawned on me that us blokes often need the cover of an activity to talk, a trait that isn't so necessary for the opposite sex. It's when us men don't talk regularly, especially about the important stuff, that things can go horribly wrong as I reflected in my article about male suicide.

COVID-19 has been desperately destructive and cruel yet some of our new behaviours may well bestow upon us all a brighter future. I heard it said the other day that 'health is the new wealth' and our mental wellbeing is fundamentally fuelled by the need to talk and be listened to.

So ladies, if your fella decides to spend some time with another man it doesn't necessarily mean that they are intent on forming a Pet Shop Boys or Frankie goes to Hollywood tribute act. And men, it's good to spend quality time with other men without the need to get smashed, although ironically Chris and I ended the day with a glass of champagne!

Cheers to all you chaps out there!
I'm off for a ramble with Roger.





How Dr. Joycelyn Elders *Changed* America Before It Was Ready

More than 25 years later, we're finally heeding the pro-masturbation, pro-legalization call of the first Black female superintendent.

BY BEATRICE HAZLEHURST

PHOTOS BY LENNOX MCLENDON/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK

No matter which fundamentally American ineptitude is broached with Dr. Joycelyn Elders, she will pivot the discussion to one core injustice: misogyny. Education? Leaves women uninformed of their sexual empowerment. Health care? Overlooks basic female needs. Racism? Much worse when it intersects with female gender identity. Reproductive rights? Don't even get her started.

For Elders, the first Black female surgeon general of the United States, all roads of inequity have always led back to the mistreatment of women. Statistically, she has a point. That women account for almost half of the world's population and are still yet to secure their own liberation seems unfathomable, if we're going to treat systemic inequity at the root, it's worth starting there.

Although that concept has taken generations to grasp.

By the time Elders reached Washington, D.C., the Arkansas endocrinologist had already lived through several waves of feminism. In the 1960s, Elders witnessed women blanch when she was recommended by colleagues. The 1970s and 1980s brought to her office a carousel of female rape survivors, many diabetic and pregnant because they had no awareness of or access to contraception. As one of the few Black female academics in Washington during the early 1990s, Elders decided empowering women medically would be her highest priority.

That mission came at too high a cost. After advocating for further research into drug legalization's effect on crime and the impact of birth control accessibility in schools on teen pregnancies, Elders was forced to resign in 1994 for offending the White House one time too many. The back-breaking straw? She proposed that masturbation might prove effective as a way to combat the spread of AIDS if it were integrated into sex education. "I think that is something that is a part of human sexuality and it's a part of something that perhaps should be taught," offered the doctor at a United Nations conference on AIDS. "We've not even taught our children the very basics."

More than 25 years later, Elders's stance remains firm. From her home in Arkansas—where a local power outage abruptly halted our last conversation—she articulates her joy in surviving to see the digital age blossom. The youth navigating this new world, Elders maintains, are circumventing the status quo to "educate themselves." They have all the bite of the leaders of yesteryear pushing for racial integration or women in the workplace, but the internet's connectivity means they're able to mobilize faster. When the pandemic locked down the world, vibrators like the We-Vibe (a product Elders endorses) reported a 200 percent sales spike. Within a week of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, millions had assembled from New York to New Zealand to demand justice. This year, rampant violence against trans women of color became visible.

"The internet has allowed young people to start asking questions," Elders says. "In the old days, they used to lie and be able to get away with lying, but they can't anymore. Anyone can search and find out the truth very quickly."

This is the generation of which Elders dared to dream. We are more aware than ever of bigotry or brutality because it winds up in our inboxes. We are destigmatizing our sexual preferences and infections. We are ventilating our gender identities. We have women like Dr. Joycelyn Elders to thank for it all—our eyes can't close anymore, but hers were always wide open. To Bill Clinton, the surgeon general was a liability. To the leaders of tomorrow, Elders is, and has always been, ahead of her time.

I want to start with how you developed such a passion for female sexual empowerment and sexuality in general. Where did that come from?

My early involvement with sexuality came through my time as a pediatric endocrinologist. I was dealing with sexual health issues in children from the time they were born up until college-ambiguous genitalia, girls menstruating at three years old. I took care of those children, and soon I was recommended by doctors across Arkansas. The next concern was unexpected pregnancy in girls with diabetes, and girls becoming parents before they became adults—teenage pregnancy. I didn't realize until then that it was a huge problem.

In Arkansas at the time, we had among the highest rates of teenagers becoming parents in the industrialized world. The state was poor and made up of minorities, and there was little education about sex or contraception available. There was sexual abuse. I'll never forget the girls who would come in and say every Saturday night their daddies or uncles would "use them." I didn't even know what they were talking about.

When you were a young Black girl growing up in Arkansas, did you have any idea this was the direction your life would take?

No. I had no idea whatsoever. Growing up, we were very poor. I didn't think I could ever be a doctor. You can't be what you can't see. This was

If I had to do it all again, I'd do it exactly the same way. I believed in what I was doing and loving.

" Young women need to know sex is about pleasure, too, not just pro-creation, and you can have the control that allows sex for pleasure."

the '30s and '40s; it was before TV, and we didn't go to doctors. Black people didn't go to doctors unless they were bleeding to death. The first time I realized Black people could be doctors was when I was in college.

And not only a Black doctor, but a Black female doctor.

Right! Back then, Black students couldn't even eat in the same dining room. When we graduated, there was a dinner for the medical seniors. The dean called in the three Black students and gave us \$30 to eat dinner somewhere else—even though it was at the Little Rock Country Club and everybody who worked there was Black. I wasn't that upset about it. I told someone at the time, "It doesn't bother me. I didn't come to medical school to eat with white people. I came to get an education." I was so smart then.

When doctors would refer me to parents of sick children they would say, "There's something I need to tell you about who I'm recommending: She's a woman." And then the parent would think and say, "Okay." And then he would say, "There's one more thing: She's Black." I didn't know until later, but the doctors would prepare them. I was also dealing with these children who had developed sexually at a young age, so I had to be very frank—really upfront with parents as to how they should be talking to the kids about sexuality. So there was no time for beating around the bush [about my race or gender].

What was the pushback like when you became involved in sexuality?

I had been a doctor in Arkansas for 20 or so years, as well as the head of the state's Department of Health, so I had learned to deal with white Southern politicians. The thing white men couldn't stand was a Black woman knowing more about something than they did, and catching them in a lie.

When I got to Washington, the first thing I started talking about was condoms. Back then, you couldn't talk about them, but we had to. I grew up in the era of being told that if you masturbate, you'll go crazy or blind or hair will grow on your hands. I had to just

tell Washington, "80 percent of women masturbate, 80 percent of men masturbate and the rest lie." They knew it was true, but when you say something like that so directly, you can't really get any rebuff from that.

Your views are so aligned with what the liberal population believes now, you were just 30 years ahead of the curve.

I know. Who taught me the most about dealing with legislators in Washington was the gay community. I quickly became an advocate for gay rights, and was adopted by them. I was also saying I would never be anti-abortion, and that I never knew someone who needed an abortion who wasn't already pregnant—that everyone who was against abortion was just in a love affair with the fetus. I was just outspoken and aggressive, continually fighting back.

Did you feel beaten down when you were forced to resign?

No way—I felt I was right. The things I said about marijuana [decriminalization reducing incarceration] are coming back around today. Everything I said about sexuality is coming back today.

I loved being the surgeon general, but I had no choice back then but to be open and honest. I did it right the first time. If I had to do it all again, I'd do it exactly the same way. I believed in what I was doing and saying. And when you feel that strongly, no one can really bring you down.

What are we still getting wrong about how we approach sexuality?

There's still room for so much education. A lot of what was going on back then was ignorance. Now we've broken our silence, but there's still so much education that needs to happen. I've worked hard on educating people like ministers, but doctors only get five hours—five hours!—of sexuality training in medical school.

Still?

Still today! We're really trying to make sure sexuality education is a requirement in all medical schools. How can doctors teach parents if they don't know? High schools have come a long way, but they still have a long way to go. Some children are receiving great, healthy sexuality education, but others are not—and those are often the ones who need it the most. There's also a great discrepancy in how sexuality is taught to the genders. We've taught girls to be virgins and boys to score, but who in the world are they supposed to be scoring with?

The Supreme Court recently ruled that businesses can cite religious beliefs to avoid offering employees insurance that covers birth control. How should we confront political setbacks regarding reproductive health and sexuality?

Why our politicians have become so involved

when it's completely irrelevant to them is confusing. Why is it even a discussion among politicians? As women, we should really be in charge of our reproductive rights. This is between a woman, a doctor and their significant other. We've fought hard for our reproductive rights, and still we allow politicians to swoop in and take over. We have to stand up for ourselves and stop letting politicians make decisions based on rights they don't even live by—they just talk about.

Businesses are not going to do any more for their employees than what they're forced to. We as women need to be pushing for what should be provided to us. We as women's groups spend so much time fighting for abortion rights, which is important, but we need to fight for our total reproductive rights. That means contraception.

We spend so much time fighting for abortion rights that we bypass sex toy availability and birth control. It's like entering the battle when it's already almost over.

We've allowed ourselves to be pushed around by the system rather than taking the time to teach young women so they're aware that there are other options, that they're aware they can be in control. Young women need to know sex is about pleasure, too, not just procreation, and you can have the control that allows sex for pleasure. We need everybody to understand that. And I think Gen Z is beginning to understand that more than ever before.

What has it been like to watch arguably the biggest civil rights movement we've seen in the U.S. after living through the first one 60 years ago?

We've made massive progress, but just because we're making massive progress doesn't mean we've done enough. We as women have also come a long way since we were given voting rights, but we still have a long way to go until we're allowed reproductive rights. It takes generations. Gen Z is smarter, and they have the internet—it's so much more immediate. But we need to find a leader, so we can get behind that leader.

We don't have a Martin Luther King Jr. this time, even if we're mobilizing faster.

No, we don't have Martin Luther King this time.

We don't have the female leaders from [second-wave feminism]. Even the Planned Parenthood leaders don't seem to be as out there and pushing like they used to be. The only way we'll have the momentum is if we find and get behind those who are pushing the hardest.

It feels like the pandemic has highlighted but also been exacerbated by America's flaws.

It's very interesting that we're talking about how much America has changed over the past 100 years, and then something like Covid comes along and exposes the dark underbelly of America once again. It's exposed the wealth disparity, our issues politically—with general management and the health care system. All these things that contribute to a pandemic reaching the level it has. When you're poor, less educated, Black or brown or have a low-income job, you're more likely to suffer more.

How do you see us emerging from this? Do we have to hit rock bottom to bounce back up?

We just have to. We have to, and we will. We'll come out of this all right. It may not be tomorrow, but our young people are smart. They know what's going on, and will figure out what to do and put us in our place. I know it.

"It's very interesting that we're talking about how much America has changed over the past 100 years, and then something like Covid comes along and exposes the dark underbelly of America once again."

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